

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

HARTRIGHT'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

VIII.

So ended my eventful first day at Limmeridge House.

Miss Halcombe and I kept our secret. After the discovery of the likeness no fresh light seemed destined to break over the mystery of the woman in white. At the first safe opportunity Miss Halcombe cautiously led her half-sister to speak of their mother, of old times, and of Anne Catherick. Miss Fairlie's recollections of the little scholar at Limmeridge were, however, only of the most vague and general kind. She remembered the likeness between herself and her mother's favourite pupil, as something which had been supposed to exist in past times; but she did not refer to the gift of the white dresses, or to the singular form of words in which the child had artlessly expressed her gratitude for them. She remembered that Anne had remained at Limmeridge for a few months only, and had then left it to go back to her home in Hampshire; but she could not say whether the mother and daughter had ever returned, or had ever been heard of afterwards. No further search, on Miss Halcombe's part, through the few letters of Mrs. Fairlie's writing which she had left unread, assisted in clearing up the uncertainties still left to perplex us. We had identified the unhappy woman whom I had met in the night-time, with Anne Catherick—we had made some advance, at least, towards connecting the probably defective condition of the poor creature's intellect with the peculiarity of her being dressed all in white, and with the continuance, in her maturer years, of her childish gratitude towards Mrs. Fairlie—and there, so far as we knew at that time, our discoveries had ended.

The days passed on, the weeks passed on; and the track of the golden autumn wound its bright way visibly through the green summer of the trees. Peaceful, fast-flowing, happy time! my story glides by you now, as swiftly as you once glided by me. Of all the treasures of enjoyment that you poured so freely into my heart, how much is left me that has purpose and value enough to be written on this page? Nothing but the saddest of all confessions

that a man can make—the confession of his own folly.

The secret which that confession discloses should be told with little effort, for it has indirectly escaped me already. The poor weak words which have failed to describe Miss Fairlie, have succeeded in betraying the sensations she awakened in me. It is so with us all. Our words are giants when they do us an injury, and dwarfs when they do us a service.

I loved her.

Ah! how well I know all the sadness and all the mockery that is contained in those three words. I can sigh over my mournful confession with the tenderest woman who reads it and pities me. I can laugh at it as bitterly as the hardest man who tosses it from him in contempt. I loved her! Feel for me, or despise me, I confess it with the same immovable resolution to own the truth.

Was there no excuse for me? There was some excuse to be found, surely, in the conditions under which my term of hired service was passed at Limmeridge House.

My morning hours succeeded each other calmly in the quiet and seclusion of my own room. I had just work enough to do, in mounting my employer's drawings, to keep my hands and eyes pleasantly employed, while my mind was left free to enjoy the dangerous luxury of its own unbridled thoughts. A perilous solitude, for it lasted long enough to enervate, not long enough to fortify me. A perilous solitude, for it was followed by afternoons and evenings spent, day after day and week after week, alone in the society of two women, one of whom possessed all the accomplishments of grace, wit, and high-breeding, the other all the charms of beauty, gentleness, and simple truth, that can purify and subdue the heart of man. Not a day passed, in that dangerous intimacy of teacher and pupil, in which my hand was not close to Miss Fairlie's; my cheek, as we bent together over her sketch-book, almost touching hers. The more attentively she watched every movement of my brush, the more closely I was breathing the perfume of her hair, and the warm fragrance of her breath. It was part of my service, to live in the very light of her eyes—at one time to be bending over her, so close to her bosom as to tremble at the thought of touching it; at another, to feel her bending over me, bending so close to see what

I was about, that her voice sank low when she spoke to me, and her ribbons brushed my cheek in the wind before she could draw them back.

The evenings which followed the sketching excursions of the afternoon, varied, rather than checked, these innocent, these inevitable familiarities. My natural fondness for the music which she played with such tender feeling, such delicate womanly taste, and her natural enjoyment of giving me back, by the practice of her art, the pleasure which I had offered to her by the practice of mine, only wove another tie which drew us closer and closer to one another. The accidents of conversation; the simple habits which regulated even such a little thing as the position of our places at table; the play of Miss Halcombe's ever-ready raillery, always directed against my anxiety, as teacher, while it sparkled over her enthusiasm as pupil; the harmless expression of poor Mrs. Vesey's drowsy approval which connected Miss Fairlie and me as two model young people who never disturbed her—every one of these trifles, and many more, combined to fold us together in the same domestic atmosphere, and to lead us both insensibly to the same hopeless end.

I should have remembered my position, and have put myself secretly on my guard. I did so; but not till it was too late. All the discretion, all the experience, which had availed me with other women, and secured me against other temptations, failed me with her. It had been my profession, for years past, to be in this close contact with young girls of all ages, and of all orders of beauty. I had accepted the position as part of my calling in life; I had trained myself to leave all the sympathies natural to my age in my employer's outer hall, as coolly as I left my umbrella there before I went up-stairs. I had long since learnt to understand, composedly and as a matter of course, that my situation in life was considered a guarantee against any of my female pupils feeling more than the most ordinary interest in me, and that I was admitted among beautiful and captivating women, much as a harmless domestic animal is admitted among them. This guardian experience I had gained early; this guardian experience had sternly and strictly guided me straight along my own poor narrow path, without once letting me stray aside, to the right hand or to the left. And now, I and my trusty talisman were parted for the first time. Yes, my hardly-earned self-control was as completely lost to me as if I had never possessed it; lost to me, as it is lost every day to other men, in other critical situations, where women are concerned. I know, now, that I should have questioned myself from the first. I should have asked why any room in the house was better than home to me when she entered it, and barren as a desert when she went out again—why I always noticed and remembered the little changes in her dress that I had noticed and remembered in no other woman's before—why I saw her, heard her, and touched her (when we shook hands at night and morning) as I had never seen, heard, and touched

any other woman in my life? I should have looked into my own heart, and found this new growth springing up there, and plucked it out while it was young. Why was this easiest, simplest work of self-culture always too much for me? The explanation has been written already in the three words that were many enough, and plain enough, for my confession. I loved her.

The days passed, the weeks passed; it was approaching the third month of my stay in Cumberland. The delicious monotony of life in our calm seclusion, flowed on with me like a smooth stream with a swimmer who glides down the current. All memory of the past, all thought of the future, all sense of the falseness and hopelessness of my own position, lay hushed within me into deceitful rest. Lulled by the Syren-song that my own heart sung to me, with eyes shut to all sight, and ears closed to all sound of danger, I drifted nearer and nearer to the fatal rocks. The warning that aroused me at last, and startled me into sudden, self-accusing consciousness of my own weakness, was the plainest, the truest, the kindest of all warnings, for it came silently from *her*.

We had parted one night, as usual. No word had fallen from my lips, at that time or at any time before it, that could betray me, or startle her into sudden knowledge of the truth. But, when we met again in the morning, a change had come over her—a change that told me all.

I shrank then—I shrink still—from invading the innermost sanctuary of her heart, and laying it open to others, as I have laid open my own. Let it be enough to say that the time when she first surprised my secret, was, I firmly believe, the time when she first surprised her own, and the time, also, when she changed towards me in the interval of one night. Her nature, too truthful to deceive others, was too noble to deceive itself. When the doubt that I had hushed asleep, first laid its weary weight on her heart, the true face owned all, and said, in its own frank simple language—I am sorry for him; I am sorry for myself.

It said this, and more, which I could not then interpret. I understood but too well the change in her manner, to greater kindness and quicker readiness in interpreting all my wishes, before others—to constraint and sadness, and nervous anxiety to absorb herself in the first occupation she could seize on, whenever we happened to be left together alone. I understood why the sweet sensitive lips smiled so rarely and so restrainedly now; and why the clear blue eyes looked at me, sometimes with the pity of an angel, sometimes with the innocent perplexity of a child. But the change meant more than this. There was a coldness in her hand, there was an unnatural immobility in her face, there was in all her movements the mute expression of constant fear and clinging self-reproach. The sensations that I could trace to herself and to me, the unacknowledged sensations that we

were feeling in common, were not these. There were certain elements of the change in her that were still secretly drawing us together, and others that were, as secretly, beginning to drive us apart.

In my doubt and perplexity, in my vague suspicion of something hidden which I was left to find by my own unaided efforts, I examined Miss Halcombe's looks and manner for enlightenment. Living in such intimacy as ours, no serious alteration could take place in any one of us which did not sympathetically affect the others. The change in Miss Fairlie was reflected in her half-sister. Although not a word escaped Miss Halcombe which hinted at an altered state of feeling towards myself, her penetrating eyes had contracted a new habit of always watching me. Sometimes, the look was like suppressed anger; sometimes, like suppressed dread; sometimes, like neither—like nothing, in short, which I could understand. A week elapsed, leaving us all three still in this position of secret constraint towards one another. My situation, aggravated by the sense of my own miserable weakness and forgetfulness of myself, now too late awakened in me, was becoming intolerable. I felt that I must cast off the oppression under which I was living, at once and for ever—yet how to act for the best, or what to say first, was more than I could tell.

From this position of helplessness and humiliation, I was rescued by Miss Halcombe. Her lips told me the bitter, the necessary, the unexpected truth; her hearty kindness sustained me under the shock of hearing it; her sense and courage turned to its right use an event which threatened the worst that could happen, to me and to others, in Limmeridge House.

IX.

It was on a Thursday in the week, and nearly at the end of the third month of my sojourn in Cumberland.

In the morning, when I went down into the breakfast-room, at the usual hour, Miss Halcombe, for the first time since I had known her, was absent from her customary place at the table.

Miss Fairlie was out on the lawn. She bowed to me, but did not come in. Not a word had dropped from my lips or from hers that could unsettle either of us—and yet the same unacknowledged sense of embarrassment made us shrink alike from meeting one another alone. She waited on the lawn; and I waited in the breakfast-room, till Mrs. Vesey or Miss Halcombe came in. How quickly I should have joined her; how readily we should have shaken hands, and glided into our customary talk, only a fortnight ago!

In a few minutes, Miss Halcombe entered. She had a preoccupied look, and she made her apologies for being late, rather absently.

"I have been detained," she said, "by a consultation with Mr. Fairlie on a domestic matter which he wished to speak to me about."

Miss Fairlie came in from the garden; and

the usual morning greeting passed between us. Her hand struck colder to mine than ever. She did not look at me; and she was very pale. Even Mrs. Vesey noticed it, when she entered the room a moment after.

"I suppose it's the change in the wind," said the old lady. "The winter is coming—ah, my love, the winter is coming soon!"

In her heart and in mine it had come already!

Our morning meal—once so full of pleasant good-humoured discussions of the plans for the day—was short and silent. Miss Fairlie seemed to feel the oppression of the long pauses in the conversation; and looked appealingly to her sister to fill them up. Miss Halcombe, after once or twice hesitating and checking herself, in a most uncharacteristic manner, spoke at last.

"I have seen your uncle this morning, Laura," she said. "He thinks the purple room is the one that ought to be got ready; and he confirms what I told you. Monday is the day—not Tuesday."

While these words were being spoken, Miss Fairlie looked down at the table beneath her. Her fingers moved nervously among the crumbs that were scattered on the cloth. The paleness on her cheeks spread to her lips, and the lips themselves trembled visibly. I was not the only person present who noticed this. Miss Halcombe saw it, too; and at once set us the example of rising from the table.

Mrs. Vesey and Miss Fairlie left the room together. The kind sorrowful blue eyes looked at me, for a moment, with the prescient sadness of a coming and a long farewell. I felt the answering pang in my own heart—the pang that told me I must lose her soon, and love her the more unchangeably for the loss.

I turned towards the garden, when the door had closed on her. Miss Halcombe was standing with her hat in her hand, and her shawl over her arm, by the large window that led out to the lawn, and was looking at me attentively.

"Have you any leisure time to spare," she asked, "before you begin to work in your own room?"

"Certainly, Miss Halcombe. I have always time at your service."

"I want to say a word to you in private, Mr. Hartright. Get your hat, and come out into the garden. We are not likely to be disturbed there at this hour in the morning."

As we stepped out on to the lawn, one of the under-gardeners—a mere lad—passed us on his way to the house, with a letter in his hand. Miss Halcombe stopped him.

"Is that letter for me?" she asked.

"Nay, miss; it's just said to be for Miss Fairlie," answered the lad, holding out the letter as he spoke.

Miss Halcombe took it from him, and looked at the address.

"A strange handwriting," she said to herself. "Who can Laura's correspondent be? Where did you get this?" she continued, addressing the gardener.

"Well, miss," said the lad, "I just got it from a woman."

"What woman?"

"A woman well stricken in age."

"Oh, an old woman. Any one you knew?"

"I canna' tak' it on mysel' to say that she was other than a stranger to me."

"Which way did she go?"

"That gate," said the under-gardener, turning with great deliberation towards the south, and embracing the whole of that part of England with one comprehensive sweep of his arm.

"Curious," said Miss Halcombe; "I suppose it must be a begging-letter. There," she added, handing the letter back to the lad, "take it to the house, and give it to one of the servants. And now, Mr. Hartright, if you have no objection, let us walk this way."

She led me across the lawn, along the same path by which I had followed her on the day after my arrival at Limmeridge. At the little summer-house in which Laura Fairlie and I had first seen each other, she stopped, and broke the silence which she had steadily maintained while we were walking together.

"What I have to say to you, I can say here."

With those words, she entered the summer-house, took one of the chairs at the little round table inside, and signed to me take the other. I had suspected what was coming when she spoke to me in the breakfast-room; I felt certain of it now.

"Mr. Hartright," she said, "I am going to begin by making a frank avowal to you. I am going to say—without phrase-making, which I detest; or paying compliments, which I heartily despise—that I have come, in the course of your residence with us, to feel a strong friendly regard for you. I was predisposed in your favour when you first told me of your conduct towards that unhappy woman whom you met under such remarkable circumstances. Your management of the affair might not have been prudent; but it showed the self-control, the delicacy, and the compassion of a man who was naturally a gentleman. It made me expect good things from you; and you have not disappointed my expectations."

She paused—but held up her hand at the same time, as a sign that she awaited no answer from me before she proceeded. When I entered the summer-house, no thought was in me of the woman in white. But, now, Miss Halcombe's own words had put the memory of my adventure back in my mind. It remained there, throughout the interview—remained, and not without a result.

"As your friend," she proceeded, "I am going to tell you, at once, in my own plain, blunt, downright language, that I have discovered your secret—without help or hint, mind, from any one else. Mr. Hartright, you have thoughtlessly allowed yourself to form an attachment—a serious and devoted attachment, I am afraid—to my sister, Laura. I don't put you to the pain of confessing it, in so many words, because I see and know that you are too

honest to deny it. I don't even blame you—I pity you for opening your heart to a hopeless affection. You have not attempted to take any underhand advantage—you have not spoken to my sister in secret. You are guilty of weakness and want of attention to your own best interests, but of nothing worse. If you had acted, in any single respect, less delicately and less modestly, I should have told you to leave the house, without an instant's notice, or an instant's consultation of anybody. As it is, I blame the misfortune of your years and your position—I don't blame *you*. Shake hands—I have given you pain; I am going to give you more; but there is no help for it—shake hands with your friend, Marian Halcombe, first."

The sudden kindness—the warm, high-minded, fearless sympathy which met me on such mercifully-equal terms, which appealed with such delicate and generous abruptness straight to my heart, my honour, and my courage, overcame me in an instant. I tried to look at her, when she took my hand, but my eyes were dim. I tried to thank her, but my voice failed me.

"Listen to me," she said, considerably avoiding all notice of my loss of self-control. "Listen to me, and let us get it over at once. It is a real, true relief to me that I am not obliged, in what I have now to say, to enter into the question—the hard and cruel question as I think it—of social inequalities. Circumstances which will try *you* to the quick, spare *me* the ungracious necessity of paining a man who has lived in friendly intimacy under the same roof with myself by any humiliating reference to matters of rank and station. You must leave Limmeridge House, Mr. Hartright, before more harm is done. It is my duty to say that to you; and it would be equally my duty to say it, under precisely the same serious necessity, if you were the representative of the oldest and wealthiest family in England. You must leave us, not because you are a teacher of drawing—"

She waited a moment; turned her face full on me; and, reaching across the table, laid her hand firmly on my arm.

"Not because you are a teacher of drawing," she repeated, "but because Laura Fairlie is engaged to be married."

The last word went like a bullet to my heart. My arm lost all sensation of the hand that grasped it. I never moved, and never spoke. The sharp autumn breeze that scattered the dead leaves at our feet, came as cold to me, on a sudden, as if my own mad hopes were dead leaves, too, whirled away by the wind like the rest. Hopes! Betrothed, or not betrothed, she was equally far from *me*. Would other men have remembered that in my place? Not if they had loved her as I did.

The pang passed; and nothing but the dull numbing pain of it remained. I felt Miss Halcombe's hand again, tightening its hold on my arm—I raised my head, and looked at her. Her large black eyes were rooted on me, watching the white change on my face, which I felt, and which she saw.

"Crush it!" she said. "Here, where you first saw her, crush it! Don't shrink under it like a woman. Tear it out; trample it under foot like a man!"

The suppressed vehemence with which she spoke; the strength which her will—concentrated in the look she fixed on me, and in the hold on my arm that she had not yet relinquished—communicated to mine, steadied me. We both waited for a minute, in silence. At the end of that time, I had justified her generous faith in my manhood; I had, outwardly at least, recovered my self-control.

"Are you yourself again?"

"Enough myself, Miss Halcombe, to ask your pardon and hers. Enough myself, to be guided by your advice, and to prove my gratitude in that way, if I can prove it in no other."

"You have proved it already," she answered, "by those words. Mr. Hartright, concealment is at an end between us. I cannot affect to hide from *you*, what my sister has unconsciously shown to *me*. You must leave us for her sake, as well as for your own. Your presence here, your necessary intimacy with us, harmless as it has been, God knows, in all other respects, has unsteadied her and made her wretched. I, who love her better than my own life—I who have learnt to believe in that pure, noble, innocent nature as I believe in my religion—know but too well the secret misery of self-reproach that she has been suffering, since the first shadow of a feeling disloyal to her marriage engagement entered her heart in spite of her. I don't say—it would be useless to attempt to say it, after what has happened—that her engagement has ever had a strong hold on her affections. It is an engagement of honour, not of love—her father sanctioned it on his death-bed, two years since—she herself neither welcomed it, nor shrank from it—she was content to make it. Till you came here, she was in the position of hundreds of other women, who marry men without being greatly attracted to them or greatly repelled by them, and who learn to love them (when they don't learn to hate!) after marriage, instead of before. I hope more earnestly than words can say—and you should have the self-sacrificing courage to hope too—that the new thoughts and feelings which have disturbed the old calmness and the old content, have not taken root too deeply to be ever removed. Your absence (if I had less belief in your honour, and your courage, and your sense, I should not trust to them as I am trusting now)—your absence will help my efforts; and time will help us all three. It is something to know that my first confidence in you was not all misplaced. It is something to know that you will not be less honest, less manly, less considerate towards the pupil whose relation to yourself you have had the misfortune to forget, than towards the stranger and the outcast whose appeal to you was not made in vain."

Again the chance reference to the woman in white! Was there no possibility of speaking of Miss Fairlie and of me without raising the me-

mory of Anne Catherick, and setting her between us like a fatality that it was hopeless to avoid?

"Tell me what apology I can make to Mr. Fairlie for breaking my engagement," I said. "Tell me when to go after that apology is accepted. I promise implicit obedience to you and to your advice."

"Time is, every way, of importance," she answered. "You heard me refer this morning to Monday next, and to the necessity of setting the purple room in order. The visitor whom we expect on Monday—"

I could not wait for her to be more explicit. Knowing what I knew now, the memory of Miss Fairlie's look and manner at the breakfast-table told me that the expected visitor at Limeridge House was her future husband. I tried to force it back; but something rose within me at that moment stronger than my own will; and I interrupted Miss Halcombe.

"Let me go to-day," I said, bitterly. "The sooner the better."

"No; not to-day," she replied. "The only reason you can assign to Mr. Fairlie for your departure, before the end of your engagement, must be that an unforeseen necessity compels you to ask his permission to return at once to London. You must wait till to-morrow to tell him that, at the time when the post comes in, because he will then understand the sudden change in your plans, by associating it with the arrival of a letter from London. It is miserable and sickening to descend to deceit, even of the most harmless kind—but I know Mr. Fairlie, and if you once excite his suspicions that you are trifling with him, he will refuse to release you. Speak to him on Friday morning; occupy yourself afterwards (for the sake of your own interests with your employer), in leaving your unfinished work in as little confusion as possible; and quit this place on Saturday. It will be time enough, then, Mr. Hartright, for you, and for all of us."

Before I could assure her that she might depend on my acting in the strictest accordance with her wishes, we were both startled by advancing footsteps in the shrubbery. Some one was coming from the house to seek for us! I felt the blood rush into my cheeks, and then leave them again. Could the third person who was fast approaching us, at such a time and under such circumstances, be Miss Fairlie?

It was a relief—so sadly, so hopelessly—was my position towards her changed already—it was absolutely a relief to me, when the person who had disturbed us appeared at the entrance of the summer-house, and proved to be only Miss Fairlie's maid.

"Could I speak to you for a moment, miss?" said the girl, in rather a flurried, unsettled manner.

Miss Halcombe descended the steps into the shrubbery, and walked aside a few paces with the maid.

Left by myself, my mind reverted, with a sense of forlorn wretchedness which it is not in

any words that I can find to describe, to my approaching return to the solitude and the despair of my lonely London home. Thoughts of my kind old mother, and of my sister, who had rejoiced with her so innocently over my prospects in Cumberland—thoughts whose long banishment from my heart it was now my shame and my reproach to realise for the first time—came back to me with the loving mournfulness of old, neglected friends. My mother and my sister, what would they feel when I returned to them from my broken engagement, with the confession of my miserable secret—they who had parted from me so hopefully on that last happy night in the Hampstead cottage!

Anne Catherick again! Even the memory of the farewell evening with my mother and my sister could not return to me now, unconnected with that other memory of the moonlight walk back to London. What did it mean? Were that woman and I to meet once more? It was possible, at the least. Did she know that I lived in London? Yes; I had told her so, either before or after that strange question of hers, when she had asked me so distrustfully if I knew many men of the rank of Baronet. Either before or after—my mind was not calm enough, then, to remember which.

A few minutes elapsed before Miss Halcombe dismissed the maid and came back to me. She, too, looked flurried and unsettled, now.

"We have arranged all that is necessary. Mr. Hartright," she said. "We have understood each other, as friends should; and we may go back at once to the house. To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about Laura. She has sent to say she wants to see me directly; and the maid reports that her mistress is apparently very much agitated by a letter that she has received this morning—the same letter, no doubt, which I sent on to the house before we came here."

We retraced our steps together hastily along the shrubby path. Although Miss Halcombe had ended all that she thought it necessary to say, on her side, I had not ended all that I wanted to say on mine. From the moment when I had discovered that the expected visitor at Limmeridge was Miss Fairlie's future husband, I had felt a bitter curiosity, a burning envious eagerness, to know who he was. It was possible that a future opportunity of putting the question might not easily offer; so I risked asking it on our way back to the house.

"Now that you are kind enough to tell me we have understood each other, Miss Halcombe," I said; "now that you are sure of my gratitude for your forbearance and my obedience to your wishes, may I venture to ask who?"—(I hesitated; I had forced myself to think of him, but it was harder still to speak of him, as her promised husband)—"who the gentleman engaged to Miss Fairlie, is?"

Her mind was evidently occupied with the message she had received from her sister. She answered, in a hasty, absent way:

"A gentleman of large property, in Hampshire."

Hampshire! Anne Catherick's native place. Again, and yet again, the woman in white. There *was* a fatality in it.

"And his name?" I said, as quietly and indifferently as I could.

"Sir Percival Glyde."

Sir—Sir Percival! Anne Catherick's question—that suspicious question about the men of the rank of Baronet whom I might happen to know—had hardly been dismissed from my mind by Miss Halcombe's return to me in the summer-house, before it was recalled again by her own answer. I stopped suddenly, and looked at her.

"Sir Percival Glyde," she repeated, imagining that I had not heard her former reply.

"Knight, or Baronet?" I asked, with an agitation that I could hide no longer.

She paused for a moment, and then answered, rather coldly:

"Baronet, of course."

A MORNING WITH SOME PRUDENT MEN.

WE had heard much about the Prudent Men who regulate quarrels between master and man in Paris, Lyons, and other great cities of France, and determined to come face to face with workmen sitting upon the judgment seat, and see how they deport themselves; to watch the tendency of this mixed court of masters and men, and learn whether justice is done on all sides. To resolve was easy; it was easy also to inquire; but, to succeed in obtaining the information desired, was not the labour of an hour. With a kind letter from a powerful gentleman in England to a powerful gentleman in Paris; with a portmanteau full of books on the working population of France; the facts, observations, and dicta of Audiganne and Le Play thoroughly studied; descriptions of Lyons tumults, and all the evils of the ignorance of the working classes—and, let me add, of their employers—stored up, we were armed at all points for the journey to the palace of the Prudent Men.

The reply of the powerful gentleman in Paris to our letter of introduction from the powerful gentleman in England came promptly, and it introduced us to the ministry under the control of which sat the Prudent Men. It did more; it referred us to a great authority on the working classes of France and all the laws which affect them: to M. Audiganne himself. Brought into direct contact with the people who were concerned in the doings of the Prudent Men, our course became easy and pleasant. Facts were supplied readily. We consulted intelligible tables, by the aid of which we could see at a glance what the Prudent Men of every town in France had been about. A card, with a polite message to the President of the Prudent Men, sent us to the Rue de la Douane, behind the Château d'Eau.

As we trudged on the long tramp from the depths of the Faubourg St. Germain, through

the unfinished Boulevards, we marshalled all we could remember about these famed Prudent Men, and their ancient origin. For they trace themselves as far back as 1452, when King René established his Prudent Men at Marseilles; whose business it was to settle disputes between fishermen and their masters and captains. But Prudent Men have not risen to consequence longer than half a century. Louis the Eleventh authorised the citizens of Lyons to appoint a Prudent Man to settle disputes among the merchants who frequented the fairs of Lyons.

But these Prudent Men of the olden time were simply municipal magistrates appointed to inspect factories and workshops, and to enforce all the laws to which industries were subjected. These magistrates disappeared in the storm of the first Revolution, leaving the Prudent Fishermen alone to perpetuate the race. And the old magisterial sailors maintained their rights, only because their decisions were spoken and never written. There were no records of Fishermen's justice to destroy—so the Revolutionary tempest passed over the old seamen without having touched their white heads.

That which is fraternal and conciliating, and founded in a strong sense of justice between master and man, in the Councils of Prudent Men which are now established throughout France, and to the most important of which we were tending, was given to them in the year 1806. Lyons—the turbulent—suggested these councils to be the mediating power between employers and employed. They were to be little parliaments elected by journeymen and masters, in which both journeymen and masters were to have seats. And, on this wise principle, are the four councils of Paris now administering justice to master and man in the busy Rue de la Douane.

The entrance to the Hall of Labour's Courts of Justice is not imposing. It is a simple gateway, like the entrance to a Paris boarding school, with a black sign across, upon which "Conseils de Prud'hommes" is written legibly. The tricolor floating above is the only sign of the Council's official character. Within, in a long court-yard upon an attenuated line of benches under a shed, workwomen, workmen, and masters are talking rapidly; and, here and there, angrily. Two or three are casting up accounts upon the whitewashed wall, determined to make their case as clear as daylight before they bow to the Prudent Men within. Some seven or eight blouses, shabby and mournful, sit apart. They have evidently fared ill since they quarrelled with their masters, or, rather, with their "patrons." No French workman has a master. But the wall of the court is worth examination. It is covered with sums, wandering as erratically as the slime-line of a snail, and with the sarcasms (coarse, occasionally) of offended labour: "M. is a man devoid of probity: he would kill anybody for a centime. Don't trust him more than you would trust a bridge of straw."—"Wanted a young man of

eighty to do everything. Apply to Monsieur Tojoursbête fils, Rue du Cherche-Midi."

There is a stir a few minutes before twelve o'clock: the Prudent Men are about to take their seats in the judgment-hall. We pass into a spacious house. In a little conciergerie an old woman is knitting stockings. At the foot of the wide staircase stands the crier of the court, in pale blue uniform enlivened by white metal buttons. This is the house belonging to the four councils of Paris, viz.: the council for the metal trades, the council for the chemical trades, the council for the textile fabric trades, and, lastly, the council for miscellaneous industries. And here, on the ground floor, are the conciliation offices. To these conciliation offices a summons (price threepence) brings master and man who have quarrelled. The conciliation office is a closed court, in which a selected master and a workman sit, and before whom the quarrels of master and man are explained. The large proportion of cases are settled in this private court, without expense and without publicity. In 1857, no less than 49,137 cases were brought to the seventy-six conciliation courts of the Prud'hommes. Of these cases 29,431 were settled by the rudest bench, consisting of one workman and one master; the large number of 10,913 cases were withdrawn; and only 8793 cases were carried to the great or general council, which is now sitting. These pleasant facts make us look curiously at the modest rooms; where master and man appeal to master and man, and where justice is done for nothing.

The grave official in sky blue uniform respectfully invites us up-stairs, whither blouses and dapper foremen, and shiny-hatted masters, together with troops of women—the employed in snow-white caps, the employers in vast circumferences of crinoline—are moving briskly, chattering like monkeys in the midst of some great common danger.

We are in the spacious court of the Prudent Men. It is a chamber disposed somewhat on the plan of a London police-court; a vast plain room, at the further end of which is a horse-shoe table. The president's chair is in the centre; and, above it, is the bust of that Emperor whose empire is peace. At the sides of the room are two square tables, where the officials of the court sit. Opposite the president is the bar, whereat the complainant and the defendant plead—the complainant on the president's right, the defendant on his left. Behind the bar, and near the door, are rows of backed seats, where the public, and persons interested in cases, watch or wait. Silence is proclaimed. The president is in his chair, with six Prudent Men—three masters and three workmen—on his left and right. Each Prudent Man wears a silver star attached to a broad, black, watered riband round his neck, as a badge of dignity. They are middle-aged men, and bear themselves solemnly. The president (who is appointed by the government) is an elderly person of severe military appearance. About to be judged are

the cases which the Courts of Conciliation have not been able to settle. The proportion of cases left by the courts below to this court is one in five. The first case before the Prudent Men was between a contractor and one of those nuisances to the real working man we know as sweaters. The president became very irate over this case. The sweater and the contractor stood side by side, and pleaded alternately. Now one interrupted the other, and now the sweater's wife (such is the power of love) could not refrain from helping her husband out of a little confused perjury. Then the sonorous voice of the president rose above the gabble of the contending parties, the wife was dismissed into the body of the court that she might not have the last word, and justice proceeded to question first complainant, then defendant. By searching questions first from one Prudent Man, then from another, it appeared that the sweater and the contractor had been flying kites together; in other words, manufacturing accommodation-bills. It appeared, also, that the sweater was endeavouring to intimidate the contractor, by exposing his lack of ready money. It was impossible to hold the keen sweater to a point. At every turn he slipped from the president's hands into new revelations intended to damage the contractor. At last the president rose and declared that the case had been heard. The Prudent Men clustered about the president, as bees about to swarm cluster about their queen. They hummed (the seven heads packed together) also like bees. The deliberation over, the Prudent Men resumed their seats, and the president declared that "the council, having deliberated, in conformity with the law," and having heard complainant and defendant, dismissed the sweater's claim as one that was not a question between master and man, therefore not to be judged by the Prudent Men. It was a bill-discounting quarrel.

A dwarf, sallow and heavy-browed, stepped into the complainant's place; while a cleanly, white-capped woman assumed the position of defendant. The dwarf stated his case. He was a working tailor, and the woman (who employed working tailors) owed him twenty francs. She had paid him five, and he now claimed fifteen. The woman, speaking without the least embarrassment, and with a most winning air of candour, declared that the dwarf was not reasonable. She was very poor just now: she had paid him five francs, and now offered him ten, if he would give her a month to scrape the balance together.

"What!" exclaimed the president, "the poor woman offers you ten francs, which makes fifteen out of twenty, and begs a month to get the balance together for you, and you refuse! Have you no sense of Christian charity, my man? Is the world to be made a happy one by harshness like this? Take what the poor woman offers you."

The dwarf stood savagely insensible. He would have his money. Whereupon the Pru-

dent Men clustered together, and whispered for a moment. When they had resumed their seats, the president, having declared (as he declared in all cases before pronouncing judgment) that the council had deliberated in conformity with the law, directed the woman to give the ten-franc piece she held in her hand to her inexorable little creditor, and ordered the dwarf to wait a month for the balance. The woman put the little gold coin down with an air of triumph, and tripped from the court; and the dwarf grumbled as he slipped the instalment of his debt into his waistcoat pocket.

The ferocity of the president, when he was dealing with the sweater, had not made a favourable impression. We had said complacently, "Here is some touchwood of the old Empire, armed by the new Empire with a little comfortable authority to dignify an old age." But, in the dwarf's case, the president's manner, when endeavouring to conciliate the harsh little man, by appealing to his better nature, reversed this harsh judgment. It was already manifest that Monsieur the President was admirably adapted to his place.

The dwarf had hardly pocketed his money before a very dapper Frenchman, with high shoulders, covered by a light olive-green coat, upon the collar of which lay some well-greased curls, bowed himself into the complainant's place, taking care that the whole court observed his dainty cane and spotless gloves. He was followed by a grave man, whose close-cut hair, burnt face and throat, and new civilian dress, "announced," as our neighbours have it, a discharged soldier. He led a child, about twelve years old, and was himself led by his wife, who took the entire matter at once into her own hands. Dapper complainant was a manufacturer of artificial flowers, and the little girl was his apprentice. Her mother had withdrawn her from his service for five months, and he claimed the full amount that would have been due to him had the child remained with him all this time. Hereupon the woman raised her voice in defence. She informed the president that the child before him was the fruit of a first marriage; that in the beginning of this present year of grace she married "under the flag"—in other words, the military gentleman on her right. When she was about to follow him to Italy she was anxious about her little girl. She did not like to leave her with strangers, so she removed her from the house of the flower-manufacturer to that of her mother.

"How!" exclaimed the president, sharply. "You make an engagement with monsieur (pointing to dapper complainant), and you break it! An engagement is sacred, and should not be broken. Then how can you call monsieur a stranger? Had not your child been with him many months?"

The woman was energetic, and tackled the president courageously. She begged that he would observe the difference between a child working out her apprenticeship under her mother's eye, and the same child abandoned to

the mercy of her master, the mother following the French army through the Italian campaign. The mother might never return. She had committed an error in removing her child, however, and she was willing to give her child back to dapper manufacturer if he would accept half the sum he demanded.

The president then appealed to the exquisite, who was sucking the end of his cane. Would he forego his indemnity? For the amount he claimed was excessive. The woman owned that she had been in the wrong, and now sought to do all that was in her power to repair her fault.

The dapper complainant would have all he had asked or nothing.

Thereupon the Prudent Men swarmed once more about the president's chair, and hummed for some five minutes. There was evidently a difference of opinion, and the flower-maker glanced confidently round the court, now at the secretary (who was using a toothpick and reading the *Moniteur*), now at the defendants. The humming presently ceased, and the president, addressing the complainant, told him that the council, having anxiously deliberated, and having taken into consideration the interests of the child, could not allow the indemnity complainant sought, since he had incurred no loss whatever from the mother's fault. The court, moreover, annulled the apprenticeship.

A workwoman now tripped into the complainant's place, while a lady in the most bouffante of crinolines, and dazlingly dressed, followed to the position of defendant. This was a case of hard swearing. The poor workwoman had done work for the defendant, who kept a milliner's establishment, and could not obtain her wages, viz. twenty francs. The lady, in a shrill, harsh voice, declared that she had paid the workwoman the full value of her labour. But ugly facts turned up. It was proved that the shrill lady had since acknowledged the debt, and had promised week after week to pay it. It was clear that the lady had not adhered rigidly to the truth, and that she was endeavouring to defraud a poor woman of her wages. Yet it was difficult to determine the value of the woman's work. The Prudent Men here displayed their peculiar value. They asked the workwoman what she had done for the defendant. The woman described various mysterious items of feminine under-clothing amid the laughter of the court. This was enough. The Prudent Men deliberated, masters and men, and fixed the fair price. Then there was the hard swearing on both sides, out of which neither complainant nor defendant came quite clean. But defendant was the intrepid swearer, and had torn her books in suspicious places. She was told by the president that he could hardly trust himself to express his opinion and that of the court on her want of self-respect. The court ordered her to pay ten francs to the workwoman. The elegant milliner tossed her head and whisked her crinoline, and endeavoured in various feminine ways to convey

to the Prudent Men her contempt for them and their proceedings. But the president called the next case, without deigning to notice either the toss of the head or the whisking of the crinoline.

Here was a quarrel between a hairdresser and his man. The heads of complainant and defendant stood in open rivalry before the Prudent Men, models in their way, of the coiffeur's art. The complainant narrated his grievance against his late master. He had been engaged to dress hair, and had been regarded with especial favour by his master, having brought a distinguished customer with him (whose hair he had had the honour of dressing for years) from the *Chaussée d'Antin*. The distinguished customer had, however, run up a bill, and was now taken in execution. The master hairdresser declared now, that his man dressed the distinguished lady's hair on his own account; or rather that she was to be a customer of the shop, if she paid, and of the poor journeyman, if she did not pay.

"Rather an elastic way of doing business," said the president.

The journeyman's complaint was, that his master had discharged him, and held his few clothes as security for the distinguished customer's unpaid bill.

The Prudent Men ordered the master to give up the journeyman's effects, to pay him his wages in full. Moreover, they treated the master to some wholesome advice on the proper conduct of an employer towards his servant.

Other cases followed. One in which justice was admirably administered between a slop-seller and a poor needlewoman, and another, in which a man claimed a week's wages. It appeared that the man had left his work for two days, that he might indulge in *Barrière* amusements. Another workman had therefore been put in his place. The president indignantly dismissed the case, saying no man of honour claimed wages who had not done work. Master and man were presently heard quarrelling on the staircase. We followed them, anxious to hear the termination of the dispute. Two policemen were at the elbows of the disputants in a minute. But the master, very kindly, asked the police not to take notice of the angry idler. They wrangled along the *Rue de la Douane*, till they were lost in the crowds of the *Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle*.

Let us here note, in closing our morning with the Prudent Men—a morning that has suggested to us many useful rules and laws for home use—that out of the 8793 quarrels referred in 1857 from the private conciliation courts to the public general courts, 6193 were withdrawn before judgment had been pronounced; that 2076 cases went to judgment; that there were threats of appeal in 526 cases; and that only 54 appeals to the superior courts were actually made.

What misery, bad feeling, and injustice might

have been saved, had such Councils of Prudent Men been established in London during the recent strike!

SMALL SHOT.

BITS OF GARDEN.

No man or woman has a right, within the bounds of law, to do anything he or she chooses or pleases with his or her own. A full-grown woman, in a semi-detached house, has no right to begin to learn music at her time of life, and be zealously determined upon working herself to what never will be anything like perfection, by repeating the same tune from eight in the morning until eleven and a half P.M., with relaxation only during dinner-time. Perhaps she has her tea placed beside her on the piano, and stoops her head to drink while she continues playing. She cannot be indicted at the petty sessions. Besides, she may be really the nicest neighbour in the world, and it is the inventor of pianos, who ought to undergo punishment. A fiddle owns that it can only squeak. A bass-viol never professes to do more than grumble, or a flute to whistle, or a drum to make a noise of thumping. All this associated whistling, squeaking, grumble, and thump, put together, is delightful, of course, in the Opera House, to which only those people go who like it. But a piano violently seizes you with the pretence that it can do the work of an entire band; that it can squeak, grumble, whistle, thump, and otherwise combine varieties of noise incident to the work that it takes sixty men to perform properly with other instruments. The man who invented such a machine in a form that led to its introduction into houses with thin party walls, deserved to be bound with cords of catgut, and to be beaten upon with small hammers all his days.

Neither has a man any right to do what he pleases with his own garden. Has a landlord any title to let a house with a garden to a tenant known to possess a cart-load of the ugliest and most lumpish vases that have ever been turned out of clay? If not, what damages may the landlord of the house next door be liable to, unless he will serve a distingas, or a fierifacias, or something else that is potent, upon his new tenant, to compel him to arrange his vases round his dining-room, or round his bed, or anywhere, so that he may have private enjoyment of them, and respect the eyesight of his neighbours. Vitrol works are nothing to those vases with which some people speck their grass. They are of all sizes, and, of course, perfection of disorder is the sense of order that has governed their arrangement. The pipkins are laid near the house, and the further we go the bigger they grow—none being on pedestals—until we come to the big boilers at the bottom of the garden.

From half the back windows in London, who cannot see, not only muddles of vases, but jumbles of rustic-work and miserable bursts

of statuary; not to mention, set up in the middle of grass-plots, basins and self-acting squirts? Some suburban stucco villas have as many vases on their parapets as there are chimney-pots upon their roofs; vases planted about all over their grounds, generally where they ought not to be, and always big where they should be small, or small where they should be big; and which display from the road as many statues as a tea-garden.

Somebody should write a book upon the management of not small gardens merely, but Bits of Garden. Millions of people obtain garden ground only by the morsel, and would like to make out of that morsel an occasion of rejoicing to the eye. They suppose, perhaps, that books written for cottagers will meet their little possibilities. They get such books, and learn how to earth celery, how to grow cabbages, how dig in potatoes, and other information of no use; for the bit of town garden is not a cottage garden, and requires peculiar treatment. It cannot be laid out in accordance with the rules of landscape gardening, or even of geometrical gardening, to any great extent, for it must not be chopped into mince little beds and narrow walks. Not knowing what to do with our few perches of space, we either neglect them altogether, or throw money away upon their elaborate disfigurement.

The tiniest back-yard might have a pavement, and one slightly vase kept trim with flowers, which, through constant household care, would rise triumphant over the fall of the blacks. Everybody may now understand that the root of all sightliness in a small garden is the exact definition of whatever lines and curves there may be in it, the neatness of its grass-plot, and the smoothness of a well-made and well-drained gravel walk or walks, accessible in every part to the roller, which should be worked freely as a sort of household dumb-bell, not only good for the garden but good for the gardener. But, beyond this, it is hard to go. How far may the owner of a bit of garden proceed in the cutting of small beds out of his grass-plot? How many combinations of grass, flower-bed, and gravel, may he fairly get out of a garden of a certain size and form? The scales of sizes and forms are, for London at least, very easily defined, and consequently the instructions here asked for would be most extensively applicable. These are the things which thousands of people wish to be distinctly taught. What trees, ask our town populations, may be judiciously introduced into this sort of gardening: in what degree, and in what positions with regard to other features of the little pleasure? Under what circumstances, and in what manner, may we introduce a vase, or a statue, or a bit of rustic-work? How may we really make, according to our means, the best of a desire to have an arbour? What gay and hardy flowers make the best and the least fugitive ornaments for a garden, from which even the ceasing of the blossom on a single rose-bush, is a thing to miss? What flowers ought to be

sown or planted side by side, in order to produce the best effect of colour by their simultaneous blossom? How may we keep the bit of ground as neat and bright as possible all the year round, although we have no gardeners belonging to our own establishments, and wish to pay as little as we can for occasional day labour? To all these questions, the town populations of Great Britain pause for a reply. A mere gardener may be unable to give the much-desired information. The skilled knowledge of the ordinary gardener has to be joined with the counsels of a man of taste, and these must have solely in view back-yards, the little plots in front of houses, and the enclosed strips behind. The gardening monitor must not reckon the smallest house that has a patch to it, unworthy of distinct attention, and he should ascend into no region sublimer than the strip of ground attached to the best rows of suburban houses, whether as fore-courts or back-yards.

POISONOUS MUSHROOMS.

GERARDE's quaint counsel in regard to mushrooms is as follows: "I give my advice to those that love such strange and new fangled meats, to beware of licking honey among thorns, lest the sweetness of the one do not countervail the sharpness and pricking of the other." But this advice is equally just in regard to many other members of the vegetal world. Have we not picked potatoes for our table from the family of the deadly nightshades (*Solana*)? Do we not carefully distinguish the garden parsley from the fool's parsley? Do we not pickleggherkins notwithstanding their affinity to the squinting cucumber (*Elatarium*), which poisons those who eat it? And do we not use horseradish in spite of the fatal accidents occurring every now and then from mistaking monkshood for it? Instead, therefore, of being appalled by idle rumours of the difficulty or impracticability of the undertaking, we ought to apply ourselves to the task of discriminating accurately between the wholesome and poisonous gifts of Nature. It would then be found that the Creator, having given to brutes an instinct by which to select their aliment, has given to man, for the same purpose, a discriminative power of far greater certitude.

The first thing to know about funguses, says Dr. Badham is, that in the immense majority of cases they are harmless; the innocuous and esculent kinds are the rule; the poisonous kinds the exceptions to it.

The senses of taste and smell are the best guides to be relied upon in selecting mushrooms. Those having a strong, disagreeable, or sickly odour, are certainly unwholesome. Mushrooms which are bitter or styptic, or that burn the mouth on mastication, or parch the throat when they have been swallowed, should be put aside. Dr. Badham adds: "those which yield spiced milk, of whatever colour, should be held, notwithstanding exceptions, in suspicion; as an unsafe dairy to deal with." Mushrooms of a rose or orange-red colour, and those growing beside water, or on thickly

shaded spots, and in damp, darkened places, to which the air has little access, are always more or less poisonous. Some trees give origin to good, and others to bad parasites; thus the hazel nut, the black, and perhaps the white poplar, and the fig tree, grow only good sorts of mushrooms; whereas the olive has been famous, since the days of Nicander, for none but poisonous kinds:

The rank in smell, and those of livid show,
All that at roots of Oak or Olive grow,
Touch not! But those upon the Fig-tree's rind
Securely pluck,—a safe and savoury kind.

It is not however safe to trust implicitly to the particular tree to determine the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of the fungus growing out of it, or in its neighbourhood; as the elm, the elder, the larch, the beech, and many other trees, seem capable of supporting both good and bad mushrooms at their roots.

A thing to be borne in mind is, that the idiosyncracies of some persons are opposed to a diet composed of mushrooms, as others are to shell-fish, melons, or cucumbers. Then, again, though funguses are not to be considered unwholesome, they are, like other good things, to be eaten with moderation. Monsieur Roques, who has written an excellent treatise on mushrooms, says, "If you live an indolent life, are a Sybarite in your heart, or should any violent passions (anger, jealousy, or revenge) be dealing with you, take care how in such a case you eat ragoûts of truffles or of mushrooms; but if, on the contrary, your health be good, your life temperately prudent, your temper, even, and your mind serene, then (provided you like them) you may eat of these luxuries without the slightest apprehension of their disagreeing with you." People have fancied themselves poisoned when they are not; indigestion produced by mushrooms is looked upon with fear and suspicion, and, if a medical man be called in, the stomach pump used, and relief obtained, nothing will persuade either patient or practitioner that this has not been a case of poisoning. "You have saved my life," says the one. "I think you will not be persuaded to eat any more mushrooms for some time," says the other; and so they part, each under the impression that he knows more about mushrooms than anybody else can tell him. Yet, these drawbacks notwithstanding, funguses, which have been the daily bread of nations, the poor man's manna for many centuries, cannot be an unwholesome, much less a dangerous, food.

The most virulent of our native toadstools is the Fly Mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*), a large and beautiful plant, with a tall, pillar-like stalk, and an umbrella, or hat, measuring from three to six inches across. It grows in pastures, and may be recognised by its bright red or orange colour, varied by small white or yellowish dots. Although a powerful poison, in Kamschatka it is used in various ways to produce intoxication.

A brownish orange fungus, the Half Rounded

Agaric (*Agaricus semiglobatus*) found growing in numbers on heaps of manure, is poisonous, and Mr. Sowerby states that it once proved nearly fatal to a whole family who had gathered it, in mistake for the common mushroom, in Hyde Park. Another very dangerous native toadstool is the very common bright brown Bulbous Agaric (*Agaricus bulbosus*), which abounds among grass, and in woods in autumn, and has the odour of horseradish.

The old and general practice adopted by cooks of dressing mushrooms with a silver spoon, to detect their poisonous qualities by the tarnishing of the metal, is an error which cannot be too well known and exposed; for the poison may not tarnish the spoon, and many lives, especially on the Continent, have been sacrificed to it.

The safest way to deal with mushrooms is to steep them in vinegar or brine before dressing them. This was known to the ancient Greeks, for they say, "Prepare your funguses with vinegar, salt, or honey, for thus you will rob them of their poison." And in cases in which accidental poisoning from mushrooms or toadstools is known or suspected, should any delay arise in obtaining medical assistance, an emetic composed of a large dessert spoonful of mustard, in a cupful of warm water, ought to be immediately taken.

Finally, mushrooms, like eggs and oysters, must be eaten when fresh.

THE WIDOW'S WAKE.

DEEP in the midnight lane,

Where glimmering tapers feebly pierce the gloom,
Through many a winking pane,
All tearful in the rain,

The widow lies within her naked room.

Coldly the widow lies,

Though woe and want can touch her never more;
And in her beamless eyes,
Grief's well, that rarely dries,
Never again shall hoard its oozy store.

Coldly the widow lies.

God's mighty midnight creepeth overhead:
King's couch and pauper's bed,
All human tears, all cares, all agonies,
Beneath His gaze are spread.

And these poor boards of thin and dismal deal,

That hold her mortal relics, in His eyes
Are sacred as the gilded obsequies,
When purchased mourners kneel

'Mid all the painful pomp in which some great
man lies.

None may this vigil keep:

Retired in life, the widow died alone,
And in this silent sleep
None wait by her; none weep
To find that she is gone.

Only the winds that steal

Coldly across the damp and broken wall
On that pale visage fall,
As though they paused her icy brow to feel,
Or death's blank gaze a moment to reveal,
Uplift the scanty pall.

And this is she who struggled long and sore,
In the black night-time of a dire distress—
Most patient wretchedness,
Bearing a bitter cross to death's dark door,
Receiving there—if humankind may guess—
A crown of glory for the thorns she wore.

MY RAILWAY COLLISION.

If you mount the steps leading to No. 3, Upas-tree-court, Inner Temple (third floor, left hand), you will find on the outer door, in white letters, black rimmed, on an oak ground, the name of "Pod."

On a foggy morning on the twenty-second November, that gentleman (myself) had resolved to go down on important legal business (first brief) to Wiltshire, my native county.

I was deep in a legal dream, and wandering through a cloudy Westminster, where difficulties entangled me, and getting into a sort of Castle-in-the-Air Chancery, when I was knocked back into life by Mrs. Dustall, my laundress, calling out,

"Seven o'clock, sir, and such a nasty morning."

She needn't have said that. Thump went my boots. In a moment I was splashing in my bath like a tame merman learning swimming. But something troubled me, and hung about me like a damp shirt. What was it?

IT WAS A PRESENTIMENT.

A foreboding of evil it was, and I will say it till the day of my death, and would have said so, even if nothing had happened. It was as a nail in my boot, as a whitlow on my hand; as an invisible millstone it hung about my neck; and I could not find the string that tied it on, so that I might cut it.

Breakfast. Butter in pats, clean-stamped as Greek cameos, bread floury white, toast warm and absorbent, tea balmy and fragrant as Nepenthe—which some suppose it was—mutton-chop juicy as a peach. Admirable Mrs. Dustall—"perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!" Tie on that direction. See if that barrel of oysters has come. There! bless me! I've forgotten my boot-jack! Strap up that portmanteau. Thank you, Mrs. Dustall. Now call a cab. The laundress runs to the St. Clement's cab-stand, soured at being driven out in curling papers, into the cold and wide, wide world. She calls the seven-caped cabman reading aloft, upon his aerial seat, his reeking Daily Telegraph. But I take five minutes more to glance at the Times.

French Invasion. Leader on Thames Drainage. Another leader—Abolition of the Lord Mayor's Show, &c. A bottom paragraph, at the bottom of the third column of the fifth page:

"TERRIBLE RAILWAY ACCIDENT."

Let me skim it. "Carelessness of pointsman—red signal mistaken for blue. Old story—foggy weather. Only three men killed—stoker mortally injured." Cambridge line, of course. Old story—hang a director. Who cares to read railway accidents?

Oh, cab! Thank you, Mrs. Dustall. Call the

cabby up for my trunk and hat-box. Mind and send my letters on. Keep my door shut. Good-by!

I longed to breathe on the Wiltshire downs, where the strong-limbed hares enjoy a vacation uninterrupted by the opening of law courts, and where rabbits are regardless of Westminster. Tidd on my hat-box, a neat little book on Real Property in my great-coat pocket. I was off. I passed through the black jaws of Temple Bar, but for one trifling regret, a free and happy man. I knew that in less than an hour I should pass, as out of a cave, from the tawny fog into the bright autumn air, with just a dash of ice in it, so that the streams which bisect our partridge stubble-fields down in Wiltshire will look like iced sherry and water.

But "there's always a something," as my landress, Mrs. Dustall, who is given to forming proverbial lozenges from her life experiences, says; and there was "something" now. We all of us have Damocles' swords hanging over our turtle-soup dishes. There is always (if I may use the homely but most powerful simile) a button off the shirt of our temper. There is always a corn twitching upon the mental foot; so that the perfect balance of health, temper, and wealth is not very long together maintained.

A fretful presentiment of a key lost, or a desk left unlocked, buzzed about me like a little mosquito demon. In and out it went, almost visible, through this cab window and out at the other. What was it? I locked my dressing-case, my studs are all right in my shirt-front, my desk I put away in a fireproof cupboard. What was it? "There's indeed always a something," philosophical Mrs. Dustall!

I crane out of window: yes, trunk with the red star all right, parchment label fluttering prettily in the wind; hamper, "glass with care," all chained to the rail on the roof of the cab; hat-box, plaid, umbrella in oilskin case all right. Still that mosquito of evil. Still the demon gnat flying over my nerves. What can it be that pinches me like a tight boot, and yet has no name? I have it! It was that railway accident I was reading, falling upon that previous presentiment; it was that which, finding some unguarded loophole of my nerves, had got in, disagreed with me, and done the mischief. Strange that I, who have skimmed over hundreds of railway accidents, to get quickly to the end and see the total deaths, should be moved by the loss of three men on the Eastern Counties!

I arrive at the station. A slamming of doors, the wave of a red hand-flag, a smother of white steam under the station roof, and we are off; shot out into the fog, that wraps us at once in its dingy arms; rattle, battle—that is the brick walling by the engine sheds; clump, clump—that is the great fire-horse, striking out its brave limbs; jolt, rattle! jolt, battle!—that is crossing the turn-tables; that fellow in the green corduroy jacket, bending on the low crank-handle, is, I believe, the pointsman.

Pointsman: something bit me, as if a flea had got into my mind. Why that is what they called the fellow killed yesterday at Splash Bridge, on the Eastern Counties line. What malicious demon is it puts these things in a nervous man's head just as he is settling himself comfortably in the corner of a railway carriage, with Tidd on the seat before him, and a neat little book on Real Property fastened to it by a strap. I suppose it is that special small demon whose peculiar province it is to disturb men's equilibrium, and generally unchristianise one by blunting one's penknife, spoiling one's pen, ironing off one's shirt buttons, mislaying one's studs, making one's boot pinch, and rendering it impossible to arrange one's white tie with the bow anywhere but at the back of the neck. The fog thins; it is getting positively bright, though we are not at Kingston yet; fields widen, trees and hedges flow by us as if an inundation was bearing them away, or as if we were in the ark, and were drifting on fast past them.

Three stations soon distanced. Whiz, faster! whiz, faster! slide like a bullet through a gun barrel. Whiz! that's a viaduct arch. Whish! click! clack! that's another station and some shunting rails.

Flight of white telegraph washing-lines, miles of signal-posts, and split red and white targets, and dull red and green lamps like prize jewels. Faster, till it takes the breath away. Out with the repeater and time it. Fast as the pulse—one, two, three!—fifty miles an hour if it is a yard.

Slower! slower! now we slacken! I thought we could not hold the pace. Slower! My opposite friend gets anxious and looks out of window. We can't be going to stop at Farnborough station. . . .

CRASH! SMASH! BASH!

Here imagine the end of the world. Fancy yourselves animalcule, shut up by accident inside a huge Brobdingnag farmer's watch with a hizz, and whiz, and centrifugal railway rush, when snap goes the mainspring. Imagine those small creatures' feelings of horror, surprise, and astonishment, and you have ours, minus the fear. I felt no nerve shaken, though my head was giddy and my spine was numbed. Imagine a solitary man in a factory when a boiler bursts in the room above, and the mill falls to pieces like a card house suddenly round his ears. Imagine a quiet man looking out of his bedroom window, accidentally, as he is shaving, and seeing the deluge coming up to the front door for a morning visit. Imagine a Pompeian just home from Athens, and awoke by the red lava stealing under his bedroom door.

Bang! shiver! smash! bash! then an awful lull and death stop as of a mainspring run out. It was as if the train had been struck full butt by a successful Armstrong shot. It was as if we had been riding inside a battering-ram, and had at last come full smash on the wall which had been too much for us. I never rode on a cannon-ball, and don't want to do so; but an

eighty-pounder when it beats in a French ship's bulwarks could scarcely hit harder than this.

Open fly the doors, some dozen white-faced men sprang through the windows like harlequins in a practising class, out poured the frightened people, lately so red and jolly; but a minute ago flirting, dogmatising, sneering, scandalising, frowning, disputing, now all full of one thought of terror, all become, in that one terrible moment, as brothers and sisters: so levelling is misfortune. We were lately in a good ship, all sail set, flags flying, and no danger aft or fore or on the lee. Suddenly we had struck on a reef; we were leaking—we were sinking—we were a total wreck. Heaven knew only what still was left for us. It might be but a moment to live for some of us. Perhaps already bleeding men were groaning their last under that pile of ruin where the red flame rose from.

The guards, white as wood ashes, were running about, flags in hand, like the buglemen of a scattered regiment. Far away to the left, at the end where the charge had been, the engine, a hill of broken metal, was roaring like a lion taken in the toils, and sending up waving pillars of flames, as if its woodwork had taken fire, and spreading to the fragments of the next carriage.

As for the passengers embracing, or silent in staggered groups, they were unanimously white in the face. One strong-faced man was being helped from a carriage, his face seeming to ooze everywhere with blood. A lady was carried away, cut, bruised, and nearly insensible, to the little shed of a station. A young farmer, seated on his striped carpet-bag, was covering his face with his hands to squeeze out a jarring headache, produced by his being driven against a man opposite. Others stunned, shaken, and bruised, were consoling, or being consoled, or running to see what damage had been done to the train, and what danger still existed. There were messengers racing to Farnborough, three miles off, to telegraph to London for help; and there were guards and porters running up and down the line to put up danger signals, and keep trains nearly due from heaping more ruin on us.

My presentiment had then come true.

My first business on seeing no help was needed was to shut up my plaid and books, and run to the ruin of the engine and the actual spot of the smash. I found that we had driven, at almost express speed, into a ponderous goods train, laden with timber and blocks of asphalt, massive and unyielding as stone. This we had partly driven back and stove in, pounding the guard carriage behind to rags and pulp. On this bulwark our own engine had beaten itself to pieces, by a series of leaps, jolts, and charges: it lay a wreck, the funnel torn to pieces and scattered about the platform, the iron plates jammed in, as if they were deal wainscoting; the buffers broken to morsels; the giant wheels dismounted and buried in the heart; the whole crushed and powerless as a silenced battery.

Beyond, and some yards further, lay the timber-truck, its roof torn off, and, at a distance,

the planks splintered; as for the guard-carriage, it was torn to pieces as a handbox might be when a drunken man has stamped on it and trod it to bits. It lay in pulpy shreds and fragments as of rotten wood, without shape and void, and, out of the pounded mass—reduced as in a pestle and mortar, in a desperate attempt of some starving apothecary to make deal soup—we picked a torn rag with a fragment of bread-and-cheese, and two jammed and squeezed red books of by-laws, which looked as if they had been disinterred at Pompeii.

But the torn planks and broken iron, and snapped-off wheels and rods, were as nothing to us—though they rose like the ruins of a cottage destroyed by a hurricane on the rails—when the fire of the engine began roaring up in a smoky red and yellow pyramid, with a bellow and troubled roar as if howling for victims. There, busy amid the ruins, the scared fireman and black-faced stoker were shovelling in gravel to prevent the boiler bursting or the flame spreading. Before the great leaping out violence we all fell back like the Babylonians in the old prints when the furnace doors were opened to swallow up the children of Israel, and the furnace was "heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated;" we were all then, I suppose, in that unconscious state of excitement, that if the earth had suddenly opened and swallowed as all up, train, wreck, passengers and all, we should hardly have made a remark.

Having once seen the pile of débris, carriage roofs, iron bars, planks, and wheels, I employed myself, in accordance with old habits, in beating slowly over the whole scene of the disaster, determined by graphic observations, fresh as I was to such scenes, to realise fully the horror and danger of such accidents. As I walked along the line of carriages, here and there crushed or sprung, the first thing I stepped on was a round bar of iron or steel, thicker than my wrist when my two coats are on; it had been, I imagine, part of the under work of the engine, and was snapped short in two. The next thing I picked up was a jagged piece of the funnel, still black and smoking; it now stands on my mantelpiece a lively record of my escape. I also found and handled a huge screw made of iron, bound with brass, which, perhaps, had formed the inner socket of one of the buffers. It was cleft in two, as a sharp knife would chop an apple at one stroke.

Under the carriages, blocks of iron, like the fastenings of sleepers, were strewn for thirty or forty yards; and, in one of the carriages ten or twelve from the engine, the floor planks were torn up in great jags, protruding three or four feet, showing beneath them (between them and the ground) broken wood, iron hooping, and huge gutta-percha circular slabs—probably breaks or springs—torn violently in two. On one seat lay a crumpled Times, with holes in it; and on another a tumbled shawl, the fringe of which was entangled in the teeth of the splintered and started planks. When I remembered an old tradition about railway accidents, recommend-

ing you in such cases to lie down flat on the floor, I trembled to think of the paralysed victims of such a theoretical folly.

Now we were all safe, some of us began to grow cheerful, wishing to remove the ladies' fear. A young barrister who was near me, proposed, if we were kept many hours waiting, to attack the luggage-van, and distribute the barrels of oysters among the hungry passengers. Others asked the guards at what o'clock the next collision would take place. I believe we were all grateful to God for our escape. We must have been scarcely human if we had not been; but the mind, when overstrained, finds comfort in such relief, and so, to the end of the world, droll witnesses at murder trials and odd events at the reading of wills must produce an irresistible laugh.

While we were waiting for the express engine laden with navvies from London, and for help from Farnborough, I strolled away from the reassured passengers through a side gate, to which a farmer's gig was tied, and walked along the quiet country road, enjoying the calm fresh sunlight and the bright chill November blue air.

It was humiliating to man, the monarch of the universe, to see what little effect the all but death of some two hundred human beings had caused the animal and vegetable kingdom of Fleet Pond, near Farnborough. The white cows were feeding leisurely and untroubled in the meadows, the rooks were tossing about over the heath, the sparrows were visiting from tree to tree, and the dead leaves were fistling in troops down the lanes as if returning gay, in companies, from the funeral of Summer. And there, where the beech shone red, and the few birch leaves, dry, and yellow, and wrinkled, were wet and golden with the morning dew, I could hear a farmer pulling up his gig on the crown of the red-brick railway arch, just above where the trains' smoke had blackened it, discoursing as an eye-witness of the late collision or duel of the trains. Thus he put it to the friend he met, pointing with a shake of his fat head at the wreck. I was a long way from him, but I have the keen, practised ears of a hunter, and the air was clear and resonant, so, putting my head on one side, I caught it all as in a net:

"Lookun here, Friend Jackson, I was just crossing this bridge when th' express passed, and by the time I got up to you, where the lady and children are coming, I sees the other train on same line. I knew there would be something happen, so I push the old mare to a gallop and got up just as ur run into un."

He was not a graphic man, and seemed to have no further thought of the accident.

One thing was quite apparent, and formed my moral of the affair:—that it was the universal custom in collisions to hush up everything as much and as soon as possible. The broken iron was spirited away, the doors of the carriages where the floors were crushed were closed, the bruised persons led away, the ruins patched up, and the earth smoothed over the

might-have-been grave as craftily and quickly as possible. Every moment the memory of the guards became more and more indifferent. A fog every moment opaquer rose between us and the accident. No one was hurt, nothing was injured. The engine, worth two thousand pounds, was a trifle, and might be repaired. The stoker was unharmed. The line would soon be cleared. We should soon be on to Basingstoke, where the Salisbury train was waiting us. It was no one's fault; no guard present had ever been in more than two collisions before. The head porter at Farnborough thought it better not to speak; it was "not his place, you know," and the company did not like speaking. You never, from anybody, could have gathered that we, the express train, had run into a goods train that ought not to have been on the line, that they were shunting to get out of our way a bad ten minutes too late; and lastly, that danger signals, both at station and on train, if up, had been utterly useless, and had been disregarded. One would really never have thought that two hundred Englishmen had just been driven over a place of graves and escaped by a miracle.

The next morning, as I sat at a quiet rectory window in Wiltshire, I opened the Times and read the following:

FRIGHTFUL ACCIDENT ON THE LONDON AND SOUTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.—An accident of a very alarming character, and which might have been attended by a most fearful sacrifice of human life, occurred on Tuesday at mid-day at the Fleetpond station of the London and South-Western Railway. It appears that the 11 A.M. express train left the Waterloo terminus at the fixed time, and proceeded with safety, notwithstanding the density of the fog which prevailed, until within a few miles of its first stoppage, Basingstoke, where it was due at 12.15. The Fleetpond station is a very small place, and the officials there having a goods train in charge proceeded to shunt it, in order to allow the express train to pass. To prevent any accident the usual signals were displayed at the station and by the goods train, but it would appear that, owing to the fog or some other cause, the driver of the express train could not see them; nor were the men at the station aware of the approach of that train, for without any warning the express rushed through past the station at a rapid rate, and crushed the back portion of the goods train. The collision was most fearful, and it is nothing short of a miracle that the lives of a large number of people were not sacrificed. The locomotive belonging to the express train—a very magnificent engine, worth upwards of 2000*l.*—was almost broken to pieces; the tender and guard's van of the express train were also destroyed, as were likewise a number of the trucks belonging to the goods train. The shrieks of the passengers were awful, and it was feared at first that several were killed; as soon, however, as the first shock was over an investigation was made, and it was found that, although the passengers had received a terrible shaking, and several were more or less bruised, yet no loss of life had occurred. It may be a matter of surprise how the driver and stoker of the train escaped with their lives, considering that the engine was destroyed; but we are informed that these two men, on seeing the imminent danger they were in, threw themselves

down, and thus escaped injury. Information of the catastrophe was at once forwarded to the Waterloo station, and a number of men were immediately despatched to render what assistance they could, and to clear the line, but, fortunately, the line had been cleared before their arrival, so that the traffic on the railway was not impeded.

All the evening of the day of the collision I felt like a man who has been thrown heavily out hunting, not bone-broken, but jarred from top to heel, with brow headache and general sense of disturbance. Now I began to understand why timid men shut the carriage window when a black tunnel swallows them: why, when a train slackens speed or stops, a dozen staring anxious heads emerge like tortoises from carriage windows. Now I know why fretful men thrust the reeking Times into your hands just as you leave a station, and, with fore-fingers jammed on a small paragraph about a collision, ask you angrily if "it isn't shameful?"

CHERBOURG.

II. IN THE TOWN.

THOUGH modern as an arsenal, and though pre-eminently a work of art rather than of nature, Cherbourg has a history. The reader need not be dragged through the troublesome controversies of the French savans as to whether it was originally Carobergus, Cherebertum, or Chieresburg. But it is interesting to know that somewhere about the year 945, the Danish king, Harold Blaataud (Blue-tooth or Black-tooth) was lying there, and that he helped young Richard Sans Peur, the third Duke of Normandy, against King Louis of France. Indeed, the whole peninsula of the Cotentin was more or less famous during ancient times. To the eastward of Cherbourg, a few leagues off, lies Barfleur, whence the fatal *Blanche-Nef* sailed, and drowned the heir of our King Henry the First with a whole company of high courtiers. Stephen carried Cherbourg by siege during his wars with the Empress Maud; and, at the end of that century, the place furnished a contingent to Cœur de Lion's Crusade. During Richard's reign, by the way, the English navy took a great start—another of the indirect results of the Crusades. That king issued the first "articles of war" about A.D. 1190; a primitive code, which punished the murderer by lashing him to his victim's body and throwing him into the sea.

The truth is, that Cherbourg never rose to the distinction of a place like Portsmouth; which is as historic, in its way, as Winchester. Cherbourg is essentially modern, a creation of engineering; of science; of refined skill in things warlike. From nature—unlike Brest, with its noble river and bay—Cherbourg derived only a good, though undefended roadstead, a line of rocky coast producing plenty of excellent granite, and, greatest attraction of all, a position facing England in a tolerably smooth part of the Channel. Art has protected the Rade, or anchorage, with an unrivalled breakwater (the "Digue"), has constructed one of the most con-

venient of dockyards, and has fortified Digue, dockyards, rock, and coast, with lines of cannon.

The battle of the Hogue, our constant appearance in war time off those coasts, our success in 1758—these were the later events which prompted the French to see what they could make of this ancient port on the advanced promontory of the Cotentin. The Bourbons began the work. The great Vauban had been there, and seen that the first thing needful was to defend the Rade. He had suggested plans; but many years passed before anything came of his suggestions. In 1777, during the American war, M. le Vicomte de la Bretonnière made a new survey of the district, and to him was due the notion of a Cherbourg Breakwater. Four years passed before a resolution was come to on the subject; but, in 1781, the Prince de Condé, accompanied by the Ministers of War and Marine, arrived there; a Digue was resolved upon and commenced.

This breakwater has its own history. The first attempts to lay its foundation (in a line from east to west, between two and three miles from the shore) failed. Every gale shook the masses of stone which were sunk by engineers in the waves. Pauses ensued in the work, but, nevertheless, it advanced; and advanced in spite of storms political as well as other. All French governments have done something for Cherbourg; and, while one of the basins of the Fort Militaire, or dockyard, bears (as we all remember) the name of Napoleon the Third, another bears that of Charles the Tenth.

When the Digue began to acquire solidity of foundation, and to defy wind and wave, the next thing was to fortify it. Protected on the eastern end by a rocky isle, crowned with defensive works, it presented, also, four great forts along its whole extent. Here, then, was gained the immense point of a defence for the Rade, where vessels could lie equally unassailable by weather or squadrons. We shall see the Digue again presently. But let the reader begin by impressing on his mind that the great feature of Cherbourg is this defence of its dockyard and roadstead by one of the grandest works of engineering in the world.

Meanwhile, let him accompany us from the station at the south-eastern end, or back of the town, and try to feel familiar with the place. As we go along, we reach the quays; the town lying to our left, the sea and Digue in the distance before us, and, just at our right, the commercial basin. This is an oblong-shaped piece of water for the reception of merchant craft of such peaceful traffic as Cherbourg possesses. We need hardly say that in this department there is little to boast of. A handful of brigs, or brigantines, are lying there, generally; one unloading pine, perhaps (with a crew so Scotch in appearance that we go up and address a sailor belonging to her, who answers in Norwegian), another from Guernsey, a third from Havre or Caen, and so on. The quay is sprinkled with cafés; and, pursuing your course round it, you come out in full front of the

Digue, with the sea breeze fresh about you. We are now on the parade-ground of Cherbourg, on the "Quai Napoléon." A showy equestrian statue in bronze, mounted on a pedestal of granite surrounded by a rail and guarded by a sentry, is the grand feature of this quay. Here, opposite the blue waters, the Cherbourgian *idea*, embodied in a theatrical bit of art, is rampant. For, on proceeding, we find the mighty First Napoleon, his cocked-hat slouched over a face full of what is intended to be the poetry of a gloomy meditateness and resolution, seated on a prancing steed, with his left hand pointing towards England. On one side of the pedestal is inscribed, in golden letters, the words which we here translate:

I HAD RESOLVED
TO REVIVE AT CHERBOURG
THE MARVELS OF EGYPT.

On the other side, the simple date of the Third Napoleon's visit last year. The statue is a poor affair, though showy in execution. But how execrable is the taste which could give such a gesture to the great man, who surely does not need a clap-trap celebration of this kind! Yet it tickles the common French mind. Brisk young commercial gents allude to it, with a polite chuckle, before you. No wonder that a sturdy Briton should be tempted to apostrophise the horseman with "Ah, your majesty! you prance, but you don't move on for all that!" As for Egypt, when one sees Egypt mentioned at Cherbourg, one thinks of the Nile—perhaps, too, of Nelson.

Turning our back on the theatrical nag, and, perhaps, musing of Astley's, we stride into the town. It is a white-looking, irregular town, of twenty-five thousand, or so, inhabitants, with winding streets, conspicuously clean—much cleaner than Rouen or Caen, and a paradise compared with the smaller Norman places. Though populous and reasonably extensive, it is, however, singularly ill-provided with the conveniences of good urban life. We heard one Frenchman tell another, that when Prince Napoleon Jerome passed from the railway station to the quay a couple of months since, he had to make the transit in an omnibus. This poverty of French social life strikes an Englishman much. For example, we had at my hotel a general staying, who had come to make an inspection, and whose guard of honour rather gave dignity to the establishment. Whenever this veteran went out, he was driven by a man in a blouse, as shabby as the carriage he drove. Cherbourg is bare and beggarly in all these respects compared with our seaports; and, indeed, its dulness is deplored by the French naval officers. It is simply a strong place, a cold, hard, clenched fist presented at the nose of John Bull. The church is ugly, the public buildings insignificant, the hotels ordinary, the shops third-rate. We had better stick to the military or naval works, for these are noble.

So, then, let us call a batelier or boatman, and take a look at things from the water.

But no, we had better first ascend that

grand-looking hill (it is hardly "a mountain" though the French take care to call it so) in the rear of the city, rising behind the railway station, like a baby Rock of Gibraltar. That is the Montagne de la Roule, from whose stony sides many a slice was cut to help the building of the Digue. There are two roads up it, a broad and a small one, made zig-zag along its sides, reminding one of the aforesaid Gib with its old Mole, Ragged Staff, &c., and the midshipman's matutinal cruise in the jolly-boat to fetch the ship's beef; a disagreeable duty which mids generally relieve by capturing the kidneys for breakfast. Her Britannic Majesty ascended the Roule, with the French Emperor, in a carriage. We shall go more modestly, by the narrower of the roads, afoot. The sun of a mild October day is quite strong enough to make climbing warm work, and we are glad to pause at the top and breathe the delicious air amidst the yellow broom which crowns it, and which recalls at once bonny Scotland and the Plantagenets. The eye ranges inland over a wild brown country merging into pleasant green plains; and, seawards, many a league beyond, the long, white-towered Digue, some three miles long, lies across the anchorage like a mighty bar of bone. At our feet is the town, bounded left and right by dockyard and mercantile basin, and trimmed somewhat at the corner just below us, where the railway station stands fringed by trees.

La Roule, the mountain of Cherbourg—quarry, look-out place, and fort in one—has been advancing in its military character since her Majesty's visit. The summit is attaining completion as a fortification. The masonry is of beautiful granite, the earthworks solid and neat, and a brand new caserne or barrack is just finished there also. In walking round, you observe spacious corners with room for big guns to traverse in; and the big guns, no doubt, are to be there soon. The barracks are extremely neat. They are sunk in the head of the hill without being dark or close; and the rooms, including kitchens with their large solid stewing-boilers, are substantial and convenient in all their arrangements. La Roule will not accommodate a large force; yet one of moderate size holding a fortified hill which rises over Cherbourg in this fashion, would be formidable enough. It is the Capitol of Cherbourg—its Acropolis. Capricious Nature has denied an Acropolis to Caen, which calls itself the Athens of Normandy.

La Roule once visited, we make our next excursion a nautical one, and are soon bowling along in a lug-rigged boat, leaving quays, houses, and the prancing statue behind us. The ear is startled at the boatmen's cry to the man steering of "loff;" one of several sea-terms common to both tongues, and probably drawn from a very remote antiquity.

As the boat moves cheerfully on its way, a look behind at the Port Militaire, or dockyard (it is on the right of us while so looking), shows the smoke of its forges, and the edging of cannon which it presents to the sea. But we soon begin to draw near to the Digue, and its

long fort-crowned line grows more imposing than ever. It runs across the roadstead, as we have seen already, a mighty sea-wall—leaving space inside it for from forty to fifty great ships, if need be—to any of which the dockyard, be it remarked, could give access at any state of the tide. The roadstead (Rade) is entered, then, by passages at east and west, right and left, that is, to us who are approaching the Digue in our boat. These passages, of course, are covered by batteries, the gauntlet of which everything that enters must run. At the eastern end, for example, there is the fort with which the Digue terminates, and vis-à-vis to it that which occupies the Ile Pelée. An enemy's ship penetrating between these would be closed upon by the fire of both, like a piece of paper by a pair of scissors. In fact, the Rade altogether is defended by nearly six hundred guns; and if we admit Sir Howard Douglas's calculation of the proportionate force of guns in ships and shore-batteries, it is hard to see where a squadron strong enough to master the place can ever come from. Sir William Armstrong's friends say that his terrible guns could shell the whole arsenal from a distance too great to make the Digue or other forts of any consequence; but, though the country justly hopes much from Sir William's discoveries, such speculations smack too strongly of exaggeration.

In visiting the Digue, the best plan is to land at Fort Central—the name of which sufficiently explains its position—and to extend one's observations towards either end as may be agreeable. So, we mount the landing-stairs, and are received by the "garden," a functionary perfectly enraptured with the work to which he belongs. It is "gigantesque," and without a parallel in the world, says he of the Digue; it is visited by people from all parts of Europe; "enfin, elle est magnifique." This enthusiasm—always delightful to meet with—for their public works is universal amongst the mass of the French. But they cannot bear criticism, patiently. They cannot hear of any great thing elsewhere without instantly attempting to match it; to "cap" the étranger's description by another of something Gallican. And, as a certain amount of sharpness is more general amongst the mass there than here, this tendency furnishes a traveller with a good deal of amusement, particularly in conjunction with that familiarity which Balzac so often alludes to as "*la familiarité Française*"—a lively assumption of equality in the midst of despotism, not unlike that of the slaves in the Latin comedy.

Standing, then, on the famous Digue, and listening to as much of the garden's loquacity as seems profitable, we admit at once that we are contemplating the results of a very great and skilful labour. 'Tis a Babylonian sea-wall, worthy of Neptune's chariot-wheels, and wide enough to accommodate the moist old god should he ever wish to enjoy such a drive. It is based upon a bed of stones; a shoal formed of which you see, in looking down upon the water. It is built of immense solid blocks, and fronted by

a granite parapet of beautiful masonry six feet high, five to six feet thick, and coated with asphalt. Fort Central—which we may take as a specimen of the four forts—is a round tower comprising a raised battery, and mounting forty pieces. Inside, as at La Roule, there is a barrack and establishments. The Digue has its own social life and population, even in peace time; there is a canteen where the labourers get refreshments; and the present writer passed two agreeable young ladies, daughters of an official, on their way "home." How could one help thinking of the pic-nics long ago to Plymouth Breakwater—which, by-the-by, is only about a third of the length—in one's younger days, when the old Indescribable, 80 (she is a coal-hulk, now, alas!), was fitting out for the Syrian war, and the two sweetest things in life were Devonshire cream and the two Miss Collingwood Podgers?

The forts on the Digue are:

East Fort (sixty cannon).

Fort Central (forty cannon).

Fort Intermédiaire (fourteen cannon).

West Fort (sixty cannon).

The number of guns are those of 1858. But the number on the Digue is greater now than the aggregate of these would amount to; for batteries are being formed along the general line in addition to the regular establishments of the forts, and, in strolling along we come upon preparations for the mounting of guns frequently—ring-bolts in the parapet, tram-road for the carriages to traverse on, and such symptoms. Some of the new grooved cannon—those rifled with four instead of two grooves—are, I believe, already on the Digue. But the neat little caps in which the heads of guns are often enveloped, prevent the curious tourist from

seeking the bubble—information,

Even at the cannon's mouth.

And it doesn't do at a place like Cherbourg to go asking downright questions of a business-like description, note-book in hand. You would soon find yourself cut short with "*Connais pas, monsieur,*" and sulky looks. As it was, I think, one or two of my neighbours at our table d'hôte thought I had been at Cherbourg long enough; and one queer old gentleman, with a decoration that looked like a little bit of tomato, asked me why I stayed at this stupid place, and did not go to Nice?

The Digue could, no doubt, mount five hundred guns; and, as has been intimated before, not only *it*, but several forts in addition, protect the Rade. Such are Fort Impérial (on l'Ile Pelée above mentioned), Fort des Flammes, and others, making a dozen in all. Yet the dockyard is fortified on its own account, inside the whole of them. There is a good deal of picturesqueness about these Cherbourg forts, perched as some of them are on clumps of black rock, and glittering grey in the sun and sea.

A dram to the garden, and we are again afloat, and "running free," as the phrase is, for the shore. It is a spacious yet snug Rade this—

however inferior to Spithead or the Sound in scenery—with plenty of room to swing, and fifteen fathoms water, or so, underfoot. But how empty of shipping, and how different in stir, bustle, and gaiety, from the Portsmouth which we saw this August! Men-of-war there are none but a frigate and a corvette, to which adds itself a Dutch frigate, presently, come in for repairs. Yachts, pleasure-boats, passenger steamers, are not much seen at Cherbourg at the best of times, and it is now the dulllest part of autumn. A pretty little steamer runs out some days; she is the boat that is laying down the telegraphic cable along the coast.

The Port Militaire lies on the north-west side of the town, beyond the prancing statue. For leave to see it, the stranger must apply—presenting his passport at the same time—to the Préfecture Maritime. This is the naval head-quarters, communicating by telegraph with Paris, and to which came one morning, while we were there, the order to push on with the Chinese preparations. Admission to the Port was granted, without any questions asked, in my case: but the ticket is always for a limited time, and bears on it directions that you shall be accompanied by somebody; the whole affair being conducted, it is right to add, with every courtesy.

Walking briskly along the western streets—narrow, white, stony, and clean—one finds the dockyard wall to one's right, bounding a long suburban road, planted with trees. Soldiers pass at every step, as in all parts of Cherbourg: marine infantry in blue trousers, line regiments in red, the latter smaller men, nimble, bullet-headed, close-cropped, with white gaiters, who carry, swingingly and easily, muskets that might seem a deal too large for them. The sword bayonet is to be seen, too,—a short, rather curved, two-edged sword, with brass handle, which becomes a bayonet on the musket, and a short sword in the belt. But more interesting than these is a large white building, with a ground in front and railed, on the opposite side from where the dockyard is, and bearing in the centre, over an ornamental device, formed of flags, the words

EQUIPAGES DE LA FLOTTE.

This is an edifice of purposes and objects quite unfamiliar to a Briton; an edifice the very existence of which is an anomaly in British eyes, a SAILORS' BARRACKS. We pass a blue-jacket sentry, and, peering through the railings, we see groups of sailors walking up and down before the long whitewashed building with its hundred windows in a row, the sight being somehow an unnatural one. Superficially, all sailors resemble each other, and these men are more like British sailors than the soldiers are like British soldiers. It is the dress, no doubt, as well as the fact (true, at least, of the sailors I saw at Cherbourg) that in size and looks French sailors are more up to the British mark than most people, perhaps, suppose. Only, there is the old objection, which is equally felt in looking at Russians. They are too soldier-like,

too pipe-clayish; and when on Sunday they march down to the Quai Napoléon with drums beating before them, the rub-a-dub-dub and the regular tramp of feet scare away the sea poetry which belongs to a Guernsey frock and a loose-ribbed straw hat. So it is when they are amusing themselves. They pace along, bolt upright, in gangs of half a dozen, singing in a barren, noisy characterless manner; and when drunk even, they want Jack's riotous and brutal humour, and only look stupid. But they are fine, strong men, clean, and in good order.

There were about eighteen hundred seamen in these barracks in October. It is undoubtedly a handy way of keeping them while ships are fitting out, or paying off, or till they are required elsewhere. Naval men are getting tired of our plan of "hulking" the crews, while a ship is preparing, in rusty, wormeaten, small old vessels, involving an endless amount of rowing about; of discomfort, and loss of time. We need not make soldiers of our men, either; yet a Government Sailors' Home, so to speak; a building adapted to their habits, and conveniently situated, might be worth thinking of in our principal ports.

Near the building devoted to the reception of the "Equipages de la Flotte" are various traces of the kind of population in these parts. There are stalls where you see strings of sausages hanging up for military and naval consumption; wine-shops endlessly supplying a variety of drinks, dirty little establishments of several kinds. An Englishman is stared at hereabouts a good deal, as he wends his way under the trees onward to the principal entrance of the dockyard.

Turning along to his right after a little while, and passing the outer wall, he finds himself approaching the drawbridge and gate of this now famous establishment. The Port is defended, not only towards the sea, but towards the town—towards the direction (from eastward and southward) in which we have come. A deep fosse, the rich green banks sloping down to a broad ditch of water, has to be crossed by the drawbridge before we enter. The walls are slit with loopholes for musketry, or "murder-holes," as the French more forcibly call them. Crossing the bridge we find a handsome building, the Majorité, or administrative offices, before us towards the left, with a very pleasant bit of garden and shrubbery in front of it. In the open space, many blocks of granite lie about, awaiting employment; and these roll past you, truck after truck, or larger vehicles, drawn sometimes by men, sometimes by horses, with stores, timber, and so forth. The regular ouvrier in blouse, at two francs a day, passes briskly to and from his work, and a general feeling that you are in a busy place takes possession of the mind.

Let us pass the inner gate, and present our tickets. "Monsieur is to be accompanied? Bien! There will be a gendarme immediately."

The gendarme—in the well-known cocked-hat, light blue trousers, and sabre, of his order,

a functionary inferior both in neatness and solidity to the nobler "Peeler" of home—now walks us round a set route. It is plain that this duty bores him, and he evinces no great anxiety to show us all the workshops or ateliers. Nevertheless, we see what we can, and with the impressions now to be recorded.

Cherbourg Dockyard is more remarkable for convenience, happy adaptation of new precautions and discoveries, than for size as a building port. A French naval officer is pretty sure to remind you of this, and to caution you against thinking of it as of the great historic ports of Brest and Toulon. The chief impression on the mind is of the beauty and airiness of the workshops, not of the number of vessels, which is comparatively small.

Naturally, the basins are first visited, the Avant-Port on the right opening into the sea, and communicating with the Napoleon the Third Basin inside to the left, and the Bassin Charles Dix, further on ahead towards the west. We repeat, that ships can *always* enter, which is very important when we come to try and estimate what the chief use of Cherbourg is, viz. as a place of support, refit, renewal, to a French Channel fleet.

The Avant-Port has little to interest us, the above fact once duly remembered. In Charles the Tenth's basin, we find several vessels, such as the Tourville line-of-battle ship, and the Forte frigate. The last is getting ready just now for the Chinese expedition. She is rather old, and, what is odd in these days whether in France or England, has never been fitted with a screw. The Tourville is below the newest standard of two-deckers; but a fine ship for all that. She is in commission (or "armée"), and, on going on board, we find men working at her. The other most noticeable men-of-war afloat in the basins are the Impétueuse, a large frigate, and the emperor's beautiful steam yacht Aigle. But, in none of these, is there anything peculiar to Cherbourg, or illustrative of any distinctions between the French and English navies. The general features of a man-of-war my reader knows already; and Cherbourg's real characteristic is, that it is a fortified workshop and anchorage. A casual observer, seeing so moderate an amount of ships, would probably think the noise made about the place exaggerated; but that is not the way to look at it. Glance at the Rade, where two great fleets could ride protected by the breakwater, and then cast your eyes round these roomy basins, these lofty ateliers, and remember that at this moment five thousand workmen are more or less busy here every day. Such is the number; and a great amount of matériel they must accumulate in the course of a twelve-month. Yet one sees no marked signs of preternatural activity either; whether in the dockyard, the streets, at the railway station, or in the Digue. Work goes on steadily, and France grows stronger, and that is all—which the public will probably think enough.

To return. Of the basins, the Napoléon, opened last year under her Majesty's auspices,

is the most remarkable. It is provided with five slips for the hauling up of vessels, which can here be taken into dry dock also, and examined and repaired at leisure. A dry dock—as we had once before occasion to remark—is just like a gigantic bath, inside which the vessel is propped up till the repairs are over, when the water is admitted, and floats her out again. Every convenience of this sort exists in the Bassin Napoléon III.

Between and around the basins, and facing each quay, are the various buildings devoted to manufactures or stores—buildings deserving great praise for their roominess and airiness. There is a workshop for each special production, and on a fine scale. Thus, there is the Atelier des Cabestans, the Atelier des Machines, the Atelier de la Fonderie, roofed with zinc, &c. The new god, Steam, is ruling at Cherbourg as with us. Enter one of the lofty workshops and you find him dominant. Machinery is whirring and burring away. Down come thundering hammers, shaping and turning iron, or wheels spin and hiss for the merciless mutilation of wood. One of the best departments of Cherbourg Dockyard is what we call the Blacksmith's Shop, where, amidst unceasing clang and glare, red-hot iron is teased and bullied into a score of forms. One of the departments to be improved is the rope-making one; for which their arrangements are still only provisory. And one of the newest plans is a great bakery, which is advancing rapidly, and will cost a large sum. Already that building presents an appearance which excites the universal curiosity of strangers; who, perhaps, wonder at the promise of an edifice devoted to purposes so prosaic, forgetting that bread helps to victual fleets, and that fleets mean (must mean, in the long run) war.

But it will require another paper to complete our survey of Cherbourg; the rather as we have some observations to make on the personnel of the French navy.

WAS IT A DREAM?

I DON'T think it was a dream. It was more like a vision; that is to say, it stood connectedly between my thoughts before and after, and there was none of the incoherence that pertains to dreams; none of that dislocation which places people where they could not have been, and represents events as occurring in impossible places. At all events, I will tell how it happened, and you shall call it what you please.

I live, that is to say, I pass my summers, which last, thanks to the climate, eight months of the year, in a little cottage in an island in the Mediterranean. There are only a few peasants and a few sheep besides myself inhabitants of the spot; so my life is, as you may imagine, somewhat solitary and lonely. I like it, however. My winter visits to Rome, Naples, or Venice—I rarely go northward—suffice to keep me up with the world and its doings. I have friends in each of these cities, who welcome me, as a quiet, unexacting, and

unobtrusive person, who need not be asked to dine, or be shown any especial attentions, but let "come in" when they receive, or even sometimes when they are all but alone. I have not many social qualities, nor any brilliant or engaging ones; but I can play whist and piquet, possess a moderate gift of languages, and am a rare listener. In a word, I am one taken from that great heap of mankind, as much alike each other as the eggs in a basket; and although, doubtless, some amongst us may have their special qualities and traits, nobody ever takes the trouble to go in search of them, and thus we float down the stream of life undistinguished.

I am not usually so garrulous about myself; nor would I be now, but that I want you to understand that I am a plain, matter-of-fact, every-day sort of person, as common-place as need be. I am neither fanciful nor imaginative; perhaps my credulity is too limited to admit of my being either; but still I am fond of a certain dreamy indistinctness, such as some German prose writers have—Messieurs Hoffman and Tieck, for instance—and I like the cloud atmosphere which often wraps this incident, leaving one often at a loss to guess how much is allegory, how much mysticism, how much matter of fact. These Germans, too, have another charm for me—they constantly treat passing events as mere symbols, indications of this or that working of the human intelligence, and developments of this or that faculty; so that the facts actually lose their importance, except as they illustrate some abstract proposition. I hope the reader will fill in this weak outline of what I want to convey, and understand me.

It is in the indulgence of a certain speculative humour of this kind that my summer days (the happiest of my life) are passed; and I go on castle-building for hours on themes that assuredly have little relation to my own existence. Now, I puzzle myself why the moral qualities of humanity should bear such scant relation to the intellectual, so that crime should not be found to diminish as men grow wiser, nor even human happiness be greatly served by all the discoveries of science. Then, I wonder if England be really on her decline, as French writers tell. Are our glories over, and our days numbered? Ought women, who possess unquestionably some rare gifts of quick apprehension, to be entrusted with the management of difficult social and political problems; and what are the sort of questions her intelligence would be best employed on? Why are some nations courageous and others cowardly; and what predisposes to this or that character of courage? Was alchemy a strict fact, or an allegory to be worked out by a chemical parable, the search after happiness being the great issue to be solved? Why is it that constituted forms of government, which are intellectually higher than all others, best adapt themselves to nations less conspicuous for great quickness of apprehension, so that, though they flourish amongst Saxons, Hollanders, and the like, they are scarcely practicable for Celts and the Latin races?

Why is cruelty so constantly allied to timidity? the rabbit often eating her young, the lioness never. Ought fiction ever be deemed successful if it amuse without a moral; as many fruits of delicious flavour have no nutritive property? Are not contrasts and incompatibilities ingredients of human happiness—to enjoy the shade in hours of sunshine; to drink of the ice cold well in the noon; to listen to the beating storm from the chimney corner—and, if so, why do we not seek out contrarieties as elements of connubial bliss?

I will not weary you with the thousand and one forms in which this questioning spirit now amuses me, now tortures me. I was, as usual, alone on Wednesday evening last. I had eaten my frugal dinner, and sat, almost luxuriously, at my dessert, fresh culled from my own garden, of autumn figs and dates. A modest flask of the vino d'Asti, a little Piedmontese vintage, was at my right hand, and a cigar of the truest perfume—it is my only extravagance—before me. From my little terrace where I sat, under the vine trellise, I had a view which all Europe, search where you will, cannot surpass before me. At the other side of the strait that separated me from the main land, rose a great mountain, waving from base to summit with a foliage of every hue, from the dark-leaved orange to the silvery olive, with picturesque villages on every crag, and tall, tapering church towers rising above the trees. Bending abruptly in, a wide bay opens to view, curving away for miles inland, every nook and corner discovering some little fishing hamlet, half buried in chesnut-trees, while far to the back ground arose great jagged Alps, with snow-clad summits, but now a blaze in all the glorious effulgence of a setting sun, while the lower hills were deeply blue, as the great orb had left them. Many a white sailed lateener lies listlessly sleeping in the placid sea, for the wind falls with sunset, and the boatmen have to wait patiently till the stars are up, and the light "Tramontane" may creep across the waveless water. It was all very beautiful and very peaceful. It was just such a picture as disposes one to think, and ask why will men jar, and fret, and wrangle, with a world so fair as this to live in? What prize is wealth in such a spot? what value is ambition? Could I myself, for instance, drink more deeply of its enjoyments if Coutts or Drummond had opened an unbounded credit to my hand, or great princes deigned to shower their decorations on me? And yet, even as I sit here, what wild work is going on over the whole earth—in the East, in China! Ay, and who knows what dark looks and angry words are passing between brothers in the Far West again, while around and about me villagers are quitting home, to join some far-away camp amid the low rice-fields and swampy pasturages of Lombardy? To be sure it is for Liberty! But what is this same Liberty? Do all peoples comprehend Liberty in the same way? Is *my* Liberty *your* Liberty? "Would," cried I, to myself, "that I could read the hearts of nations, and learn what

really they love! Would that I could know which of them regards this question most honestly, and which, above all, elevating itself above the small limits of a nationality, thinks less of its own fractional greatness than of humanity! Could we but have the magic gift of invisibility, and see people as they are, and not as they assume to be when our hosts and entertainers, we should at last arrive at the truth.

I really was in a benevolent mood. I wished with all my heart to think well of the world; and the better to work out such excellent intentions, I took out a wonderful flask of old Marcobrunner; and, providing myself with an emerald green glass, artistically "roped" along the brim, I sat down to enjoy my good thoughts and my good wine. The short twilight, if it deserve the name, soon passed, and a glorious night, a true Italian night, spread around. Sirius threw a column of steady light across the bay, like the reflected glare of a lighthouse; Orion seemed to me about the size of an ordinary carcel lamp. Who could wish for a moon in the presence of these radiant glories?

How infinitely more suggestive that glorious dome with its thousand fires! Brewster, thou reasonest well; else why this wish, this yearning hope, this fond desire, that stars may be inhabited? And if so, what are the conditions of existence there? Are they above or beneath us in the scale of intellectuals? If one could only know what constitutes their wants, and their difficulties; in short—in short—

What sort of a thing is that starry life,

As the planets revolve on their axes?

Have they anything there like *our* party strife?

Have they heard of municipal taxes?

Have they civilised habits to fashion their lives?

Historians and great rhetoricians?

Do they secretly know how to poison their wives,

With a skill that can baffle physicians?

Have *they* their dull members with Parliament bills

As tiresome and long as a sermon?

Are they dosed like ourselves with their Pullaway's pills,

And Puffendorff's method of German?

Have they Blondins to caper o'er cataracts on ropes?

And who represents Mr. Rarey?

Are they duly instructed who walks on the slopes,

And who crosses to Cowes in the Fairy?

Do they build great three-deckers, then throw them away?

Have they parsons to send out as missionaries?

And, greatest of all the great shams of our day,

Have they got Civil Service Commissioners?

To all this jargon of questioning and inquiry there succeeded a stage of the wildest phantasy. People came and went before my mind, just as the figures pass on a wall before a magic lantern. They had, too, the same flickering unsteadiness in their gait, and even waved occasionally to and fro, as we see them when the manipulation of the lantern is not in experienced hands. Some I would fain have seen more of, flitted rapidly by, and never returned;

others that I cared less for—true "bores" of the spirit world—would linger and dally, and even come back again, when I hoped I had seen the last of them. There was no end to the absurd and incongruous situations that succeeded each other.

I thought I saw the Pope at the piano rattling the keys merrily, as he improvised verse after verse of Mr. Albert Smith's Messenger. Then there stood before me the Emperor of Austria, dressed like a German peasant: he had cut one of the heads of an eagle he carried in his hand, and wished to pass off the bird for a chicken. In the distance there was the King Victor Emmanuel, like Oliver Twist in the picture, asking for more; while farther, again, I beheld Lola Montez painting a fierce pair of moustaches on Lord Campbell's face with a burned cork. Next, I saw, straight in front of me, a thin, spare, elderly man; sallow and poor-looking, who, with what appeared to be a barrel-organ suspended by a broad strap over his shoulder, seemed to implore my permission to play. It is not exactly my favourite instrument, nor was I in the mood to listen to it, but the poor fellow's white-seamed velvetene jacket, his ragged gaiters, and his tattered hat were too strong appeals to be resisted, and I said, "Be it so, only nothing quick or lively; a slow, plaintive air if you have one, or a ballad." He made no reply, but, unstringing his box, he placed it on the table, and then proceeded to wind up a little crank at one end; after which, with an obeisance like asking leave, he took my lamp from its stand and placed it on the floor at the extremity of the table. This done, he removed a small slide and showed a sort of oval aperture, to which, with a gesture, he invited me to apply my eye.

"So it is not an organ!" said I, in some surprise.

"No, signor," replied he, respectfully, "it is called the Camera Magica del Diavolo; but that is a vulgar designation; polite people know it, as 'Les Tableaux Géographiques et Ethnographes.'"

"Patria et natale solum—very fine words, wherever you stole 'em," muttered I.

"What a ready fellow was Swift!" said he, quickly; "his doggerel was better than most men's wisdom."

"What," cried I, "do you itinerant showmen know of Swift?"

"I delight in him, sir; he has all that character of bitter sarcastic wit that I prize highest; and his satire is as pungent to-day as it was a hundred years ago. I was sitting an hour with him last night, and he remarked to me—"

"Why, you must mean with his writings. He is dead and gone—been dead these hundred years."

"I know that," said he, smiling; "yet he lodges in a house I frequent. But do not lose time, sir; place your eyes here, for the tableau is already passing, and I cannot wind it up more than once a day." As he spoke, a faint, but sweet, music swelled out, and the old French royalist air of "Vive Henri Quatre"

floated through the air. I leaned forward and looked in.

"What do you see?" asked the showman.

"I see a large chamber handsomely furnished, but somewhat time-worn and faded-looking. There is a lamp on a table at the farther end of it, and two candles on another table at a distance. An old lady is working at the table near the lamp, and a man dressed like an abbé sits reading by the other. It is a newspaper he reads, and apparently aloud, too."

"Can't you hear him?" asked the showman, curtly.

"I declare I do," cried I, in amazement. "He is reading aloud in French, and I can hear his voice distinctly." The music by this time had faded away, and left all in silence as the abbé read: "To which the Emperor of Austria replied, 'I will never lend myself to any combinations against the dynasty of your majesty.'"

"Monsieur de Richécourt, I must entreat you to stop. I can hear no more," said the old lady, trembling with emotion. "The words 'majesty' and 'dynasty' are really too much when applied to 'ça.'"

"And yet, madame, Ça took them all naturally," said the abbé, taking snuff.

"What tumult is that without? what are the shouts I hear?" cried she.

He opened the window hastily, and as hastily closed it, but not before a strain of music floated up from the street beneath with the melody of *Partant pour la Syrie!* to which some thousand deep voices gave chorus.

"It is a regiment of Zouaves, madame," said he, "returning from Italy."

"Zouaves!" said she, indignantly. "Oh, for the time when the proudest thing in France was to be a Frenchman! It was not by masquerading like African savages our great kings understood the chivalry of a soldier's life. What would Colbert, what would Turenne have said, if——"

Just as she had uttered thus much, a faint, oppressive vapour enveloped the scene, which gradually grew dimmer and dimmer till it faded away. I was about to withdraw, when the showman gently whispered, "Wait, and you will see more!" and then, with a sudden flash, the whole scene blazed out, a gorgeous salon in a palace lit by a thousand tapers, and filled by a splendid company. It was a ball at the Tuileries: the vastness of the room and the decorations could leave no doubt of the locality. There were a number of presentations to be made, and the persons forming them stood at one side, awaiting the arrival of his majesty. The procession at last approached. I could recognise some I knew. The Duc de Bassano, for instance, very like the pictures of his father; and then there came the great man himself, walking with a sort of stride Charles Kean would assume, more dramatic than dignified, and scarcely seeming to notice what went on around him. At last he stops in front of a lady, who curtsies low in deep acknowledgment of this royal notice. She is one who in England had been his host for

years; his evenings had no other home than her house. He is, doubtless, not forgetful of the past, but royalty has its stern limits even in condescension, and so he simply says, "I am pleased to see you, madame. Do you purpose to make some stay in Paris?"

"I am really undecided, your majesty," replied she, with faltering diffidence. And then adds, in a lower tone, "Et vous, Sire, do you?"

"I could show you the clubs," continued the showman: "the Jockey, where they gamble—the Impériale, where they bluster—and the Chemins de Fer, where they gluttonise; I could show you the Hôtels of the Ministers, where they revel in splendour, and the Quartier Saint-Antoine, where they conspire;—but there is only the same story everywhere: all are waiting—waiting—for what? Ay, that is the question!"

"I don't care to ask," said I. "I have little sympathy with this people; they talk much of their nation, but seem to have never understood its true dignity. Now the Germans——"

"Ah! the Germans," said the showman; "they are a great people. Look there!"

He opened the little slide again, and I looked in. There was an ancient chamber, hung round with armour, in which sat a number of splendidly attired persons around a table; as my eye rested, I could see that they were the sovereigns and princes of the Faderland. They seemed to play a sort of round game; at least, they constantly handed tokens from one to the other, occasionally disputing, and sometimes jesting.

"Is it loo?" I whispered to my guide.

"No," said he, "it is a game of their own, and they never weary of it. What you see passing from hand to hand are not gold pieces, but decorations, which they go on chopping and changing for ever, according to value. Thus, one Black Eagle is worth ten Badish Crosses; one Maria Theresa is worth twenty Black Eagles and a basketful of Nassaus. As the fortunes of the world incline, however, these values differ: thus you see Prussia is now fighting hard to make his coin pass at an agio."

"And have they nothing better to do than this?" I asked, scornfully.

"Oh dear, yes; the learned amongst them collate manuscripts all day long, and there are full five hundred wise heads disputing whether Conrad was or was not a Hapsburg."

"And is this the land of Körner, of Schiller, of Goethe?"

"Ay," said he, sorrowfully,

"Where Braten, beer, and smoke abound,
Where ten per cent. is in demand,
Where Sauerkrout is ever found,
Da ist der Deutscher Faderland!"

"Oh, for mercy's sake!" I cried, "let me see some country where there is a nobler patriotism and a higher ambition."

"Ah!" cried the showman, "you want to be among the olives and the trellised vines."

And lo! there arose before me such a glorious

view as one might have looking down from the cliffs over Levanti, or Listri, or the Gulf of Genoa: a broad ocean of blue sea broken by innumerable headlands of mildest outline, with waving olive woods and tall dark cypresses cutting this soft outline. Three handsome men, in the prime of life, were sitting in an arbour smoking, and placidly enjoying the gorgeous scene beneath them. They were too distant to catch their words, but I could see by their gestures that their discussion was animated, almost violent.

"Ah," said I, "I can guess what is the theme between them. They are talking of Italy and her future."

"No," said he, dryly; "they are discussing whether Foco is better in the *Esmeralda*, or in the *Figlia del Banditto*; but though angry, they'll not quarrel."

I almost dashed the box to the ground in my anger; but he caught my hand, and gently said, "Come, you shall have your recompense. Here is a land at last which will repay you for every disappointment; here are they whose interests, embracing every land and every sea, are indeed men, in all that humanity boasts, as wisest and most enlightened."

What a strange scene was that I looked on. A great feast in a large room hung round with trailing banners and flaunting flags, on which were inscribed such sentences as "Farmers' Friend," "Speed the Plough," "The Land, and they who live by it." Jolly, happy fellows they looked that sat around that board, and clinked their glasses merrily as they cheered the speaker who was so eloquently addressing them.

"Ah," I thought, "this is the real thing at last. Here are men who regard the world in its noblest sense, and understand what ought to form its true ambitions." I wished I could have caught what he said, but the noise and tumult were so great that I could not hear a word, and I saw plainly that his audience were intensely excited.

"What is his theme?" I asked, eagerly. "How deeply he seems to move the hearts of his hearers."

"He is telling them," whispered the showman, "that if they restore his party and himself to power, he'll bring in a bill to lay all the taxation on the manufacturing interest, and that he'll repeal the duty on malt."

"And is it thus," I said, "that men are swayed? Are these their hopes, their wants, their high aspirations? Is the world nothing beyond a tricky game with some crowned croupiers to distribute the winnings? Is there no people on the earth who can rise above the miserable cares of every-day existence to devote some thought to what may make life nobler, purer, better? Is no nation great enough to assume the van of civilisation, itself displaying the arts by which others may advance,

or is the whole structure one narrow round of selfish interests and selfish enjoyments?"

"Stop—look here!" cried the showman; and there was an almost reproof in the tone he used.

I stooped down and peeped in. It was a moonlight on the sea-shore, and a solitary figure sat on a rock and gazed out over the wide water.

"Listen to his words; for he always talks aloud when thus alone."

I bent my ear and heard. It was a rich mellow voice, speaking Italian. He appeared as though reciting to himself the form of some essay he was about to commit to writing. If in some respects it seemed like a sort of comparison of the various social conditions of men in different lands, it occasionally diverged from questions of morals to those of governments. Never before had I heard the difficulties of discipline, as adapted to race, so admirably considered. Where certain concessions could or could not be accorded; where liberty grew to be licence, and where limitation became a tyranny, he touched on with a skill of marvellous power. That even justice itself took forms in unison with certain temperaments, he also showed, so that the penalty that men deemed reasonable here, might there be regarded as unendurable. What wise opinions, too, he uttered on the subject of the Press, and what perils did he show awaited those who drew their daily maxims too implicitly from its guidance.

"May I speak to him?" I cried at last; "this is indeed the man I have long sought for."

"One question alone can I permit," said the showman, as he prepared to close the box.

"Of what great nation are you a citizen?" said I, in deepest deference to the stranger. "Where is the land whose people have institutions and maxims such as these?"

"I am a citizen of Monaco, signor," said he, rising respectfully. "The great country I belong to is four leagues long and two wide; my native prince lives in an entresol at Paris."

I burst into a fit of laughing. On looking around me, the showman and his box were gone; the flask of Marcobrunner was finished; the night air was faintly chilly over the sea, as it feels towards daybreak; but, strangest of all, the lamp was not on the table, but on the floor, where I remember the showman had placed it, the better to display his pictures; and I asked myself again and again, as I ask you now—

Was it a dream?

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